

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences

9.68/13-Affect: ... Spring 2013

WEDNESDAY, February 20, 2013 – 7-10 pm

**Field trip From MIT to MFA**

**GUIDE and TIMELINE**

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The aerial image above shows the expanding MFA. In the foreground: Huntington Avenue (aka “Avenue of the Arts”) On right is the newly opened "Art of Americas" Wing; In left and background are the existing West Wing and proposed future expansion. Far in the distance, MIT buildings are discernible. This fieldtrip will involve a more or less chronological survey of "western" art – necessarily omitting attention to the Americas and focusing on European Art -- with a few looks, here and there, at several Asian and African and Middle-Eastern traditions.

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This page and the next one are intended to help you stay on time and on track during the fieldtrip.

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21	(5)	Grand Staircase/Rotunda -- J.S. Sargent, Murals and Bas Reliefs	_____
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29		proceed north and then West via Galleries 211 and 206	
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29		13a-13f are some traditions that follow In the footsteps of the Buddha	
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<u>PAGE</u>	<u>GALLERY ITEM#</u>	<u>OBJECT OR TOPIC</u>	<u>TIMES AND NOTES</u>
34		<b>Part Three: Western European Art 15th-20th C.</b>	(8:30 pm -- allow 40 mins.)
34	250	(14) Return to Upper Rotunda. Proceed North into the Koch Gallery (250). See, Unknown Artist: around 1620 "The Taking of Christ"	_____
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35	243	(15) See Gabriel Metsu, "Ursurer with tearful woman" (1656)	_____
		Exit from 17 <sup>th</sup> C Dutch and Flemish gallery, cross corridor and pass through the first of two 18thC European galleries. Enter the second and see	_____
36	247	(16) Grotto by the Seaside in the Kingdom of Naples with Banditti, Sunset 1778 Joseph Wright of Derby, English, 1734-1797	_____
36	247	(17) Tiepolo, "Time unveiling Truth"	_____
37	247	(18) Pannini - Gallery with paintings of Rome	_____
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		Enter the first of two 19thC European (preimpressionism) galleries. See:	_____
37	251	(19) Turner Wreck of Slave ship	_____
38	251	(20) Reginald, Automedon and the horses of Achilles	_____
		Continue westward and enter the second 19thC European gallery. See	_____
38	252	(21) Leighton "Painter's Honeymoon" (1864)	_____
		Exit the 19thC European gallery and turn right into Gallery 255.	_____
38	255	(22) Monet "water Lillies"	_____
38	255	(23) Cezanne "Large Bathers" (ca 1900)	_____
38	255	(24) Gauguin -D'ou venon nous? ... (1897)	_____
		Continue west through Gallery 258 and enter 259	_____
39	259-265	(25) Explore Contemporary Art	
		END OF PHASE ONE	
41		Beginning of PHASE TWO: see instructions for details	(9:10 pm)
42		Rendezvous at West Entrance for Departure for trip back to MIT	(9:50 pm)
43-44		MFA Reaction Form: Complete and Turn in by email with photos by 6 pm Friday Feb 22	

## INTRODUCTION

### Background/Preparation

This is an academic exercise. Please approach it as such. Begin at the beginning and work through it, step-by-step to the end. Follow the instructions as conscientiously as possible. Pay attention to our suggestions about route-finding, etc. Set yourself some performance goals; monitor your own attitudes/behavior: formatively evaluate your performance/progress; if you are unsure or confused, don't be afraid to ask questions and (re-) apply yourself.

Before embarking on the fieldtrip, you should have read carefully through this GUIDE. Spend at least an hour going over it, both alone and together with groupmates and classmates. Aim to get a pretty good overview of our itinerary through the museum before we get started.

Expect to spend around 2 hours and 30 minutes at the MFA.

For the first hour and 50 minutes (from 7:20-9:10 pm) you are meant to travel "solo"

For the last 45 minutes or so, until the museum closes, you are on your own.

Good Luck!

Our approach is roughly chronological. Again, this year, we exclude "Art of the Americas" and focus mainly on the Western European Tradition. Start by reading through the accompanying handout entitled "Timescales" and view the video: "Powers of Ten".

(What is their effect on your thinking about your present place in the world?)

Review the MUSEUM FLOOR PLANS (below, p.12)

Locate the entrance/exit we will be using.

Locate cloakrooms/restrooms

Trace the Path you will be following through the museum.

Reflect on and discuss expectations (hopes; apprehensions)

Prepare to do some fast-paced, serious, first-hand research.

Get ready to learn some valuable stuff and have some serious fun

Insofar as you can, try to engender in yourselves and each other the attitudes you would hope and expect yourself and your classmates to be able to bring to an actual scientific expedition. Try to think of us all as common members of a research team embarking on a collaborative inquiry. (One way of referring to a community of that kind is to call it – as we will do – a "consensual domain of inquiry.") But let's leave this bit of technical terminology for a later time.

The subject of this inquiry is the ineffable --yet nonetheless real -- reality of "quality" as Pirsig endeavors to deploy the term. The context of inquiry, in this case, is a field trip from MIT to MFA "in search of quality."

The point here is to give everyone a fair chance to experience themselves adopting (embodying?) a mental set and behavioral repertoire in which everyone has an opportunity to acquire for himself/herself some of the knowledge and skills arguably required of and aspired to by each and all truly serious students of the subject before us.

As scientifically-oriented observers, you will want to document the experience. Have your notebook or journal and something to write/draw with you at all times. Start now. Take notes, make sketches! We will want to be able to identify, share, compare and contrast highlights (lowpoints) of our fieldtrip experiences. Everyone should also have a digital camera that works pretty well in dim light (some cellphone cameras are marginal; check before using). Flash photography is not permitted in the museum. (If your flash "accidentally goes off" expect an official admonishment to cease and desist from one or more of the museum employees who are responsible for enforcing the rules.) If you would like to have access to more specialized, higher resolution equipment, let us know, and we will try to help.)

In order to conduct ourselves in a manner that is as scientifically credible and otherwise trustworthy as possible, it behooves us to agree in advance to adopt and to maintain (in any moment or series of moments) a conscientiously alert and suitably serious scientific attitude and reliance on traditional research methods of procedure and documentation. (You should take notes (e.g. regarding thoughts and feelings about yourself in that environment on this fast-paced tour of select spaces in search of Quality. Make documentary images (take flashless digital photos), make observations,

sketches/drawings in your journal.

In this connection, it seems necessary and desirable for all present intents and purposes for everyone involved in this exercise to make his/her way through the same spaces in essentially the same order, visiting the designated set of exhibits and objects in roughly the same order and under reasonably comparable conditions of exposure.

As a way of adding an element of control to our future discussions, we expect everyone to pass from one display to the next in the same (roughly chronological) order. In other words, please try to follow quite faithfully the sequence of encounters numerically denoted in the following pages.

Annotate your copy of the floorplan! Lay out on it any notes you want to make about the ITINERARY. As you go, keep track of where (e.g. in art history's western tradition) you are, where you have been, and where you are heading. Pace yourself wisely. Keep track of the territory you have covered, are covering and have yet to cover in the time remaining. The point is to **complete PART ONE in its entirety by 9:10 pm.**

Prepare both to do some WORK and have some FUN! Wear comfortable shoes. Bring your student ID (with which admission is FREE at all times during regular museum hours!). Be sure to have THIS GUIDE with you: likewise, your JOURNAL, together with some writing/drawing materials, if a digital camera is available, bring it along, don't forget your distance and reading glasses if you need them, and a timepiece. Otherwise, bring as little stuff as possible. You are going to be doing a lot of walking -- covering a lot of ground, literally as well as figuratively. Best to travel "light. Please do not use ipods or other devices to play unrelated content during the field trip.

What does the MFA mean to you? What are you expecting to find there? What are you going to be on the lookout for? What is the purpose of this field trip? What is your attitude toward it? Write some ideas down. Talk these questions over with your group mates. Keep questions like them in mind as the exercise proceeds. Monitor your attitude toward the task.

Stay focused on the goal of the fieldtrip. You are on a SEARCH for QUALITY and time is short. Is there something peculiar and self-contradictory (oxymoronic even) about the idea of spending a few hours "searching" for quality and hoping/expecting something of value to be "found"? What is there to be learned about artistic extensions of affect in this way? Might a better way to find Quality" be not to pursue it but rather let it come to you? What do you think? How do you feel? What is going to be your intended *modus operandi*? )

Take note of instances in which you find yourself surprised or pleased or stressed or annoyed or impressed or unimpressed or engaged/disengaged or attentive/distracted. Do you feel that the quality of your experience is being affected (for better, for worse) by your awareness of your surroundings? By the demand characteristics of the situation? (e.g. having to follow these instructions). By how you are feeling?

Of MIT and The MFA. The institute; the museum; architecture? Public spaces? Research? Education? The MFA: The works on exhibit? The objects to which your attention is being drawn by this document? Are there any objects that you are particularly attracted to (or repelled by) other than the ones selected for closer inspection? How do you feel about the galleries? The lighting? The acoustics? The presence of other people? Do you feel unduly constrained or comfortably contained by the rigorous timeframe? How is the quality of your experience being influenced by having to follow these instructions? By knowing that you are on an officially-authorized MIT academic fieldtrip that others, incl. classmates/groupmates are also taking?

Pirsig claims that getting a "quality" outcome, requires "caring about what you are doing". Do you agree? Disagree? Explain in relation to this exercise.

By hypothesis: you will have more fun and learn more from this exercise if you have some general idea of what to expect and can define your research objectives accordingly. It also helps to have a positive attitude and to be in a reasonably open frame of mind.

Like the class, the fieldtrip takes place in the evening, on the day after the preempted third class session of the term. As far as your normal circadian biorhythms, and associated "energy and arousal levels" are concerned be advised that the period just shortly after dinnertime normally is not a time of relative mental alertness and heightened attentiveness for most

people. To get the most out of this experience, it is best to approach it with a positive attitude. Adopt a mentally alert and open mental set; be behaviorally proactive, engaged, and energetic. Psych yourself up” as you would approaching an important athletic, theatrical, academic/professional event, activity, or task. Expect the unexpected. Try to pay close attention to what is going on in your surroundings.

### WHAT IS A MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS?

No doubt there are many ways of answering this question. In offering the following few we do not mean to cast doubt on other answers or to challenge their claims to legitimacy. Unsurprisingly, we owe the word "museum" -- as we do so much else -- to those who called themselves "Hellenes" and to whom we are accustomed to refer as "the Ancient Greeks."

Speaking literally, a museum is a "home of the Muses". See page 21, below.

In the highly personalized classical mythology of the Ancient Hellenes the *Muses* were supernatural feminine beings of great *meaning and power*, variously personified as the daughters of (1) *Mnemosyne* (memory) and *Zeus* (first and foremost among the gods and goddesses of the "third generation" who were associated with Mt. Olympus), (2) *Harmony*, and (3) the primogenatrix Earth Goddess (*Gaea*)<sup>1</sup> and her "consort"- Heaven (*Uranus*).

More to the point, the Muses were widely revered as (1) divine creative spirits, revered sources of artistic inspiration for all mythmakers, storytellers and performers/artists (e.g. musicians; actors; mimes), and (2) the ultimate source of creative inspiration for all great works (i.e. of all humanly-made things of *value* and of *quality* in the realm of human activity); of all artistic, technical and scientific work of any significance. By extension, the *Muses* came to exemplify the ultimate source of everything *good* in the realm of humanity and (the rest of) nature, including human sapience, creativity, inspiration, thought, eloquence, productivity, clarity, conciseness, persuasion, knowledge, history, mathematics, astronomy, athletics, etc. etc.

Can you think of other ways in which "meaning" and "power" are identified with particular mythological personages in other traditions or cultures?

The MFA was founded in 1870. Five years earlier MIT (then "Boston Tech") had opened its doors to its first class. (There were 15 students. Do you know where the school was located? When did it move to its present site?)

The MFA opened on its present site in the Back Bay Fens in 1909. From then until 1981, when the **WEST WING** was opened, the main entrance was on the **SOUTH SIDE** of the museum, in the center of the **MAIN BUILDING** on Huntington Avenue.<sup>2</sup> Since the **EVANS WING** (on the Fenway side) was added, the museum has also been accessible from the **NORTH SIDE**.

The MFA <http://www.mfa.org> is managed by a board of trustees that includes representatives from Harvard University, MIT, the Boston Athenaeum, the City of Boston, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting through a professional staff.<sup>3</sup>

Like MIT, the MFA advertises itself as an educational institution. (See Mission Statement <http://www.mfa.org/about/index.asp?key=53>) A recent publicity brochure describes it as "a place of pleasure and discovery for individuals and families, museum members, and first-time visitors." Have you been here before? If this is your "first time," what kind of a place are you expecting it to be? Insofar as it actually is involved in and dedicated to the

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<sup>1</sup> *Gaea* -- a/k/a *Gaia* or *Ge* -- is the primal progenatrix earth goddess of Ancient Greek mythology. Her etymological traces continue to show up among us in words like *geology* and *geography*.

<sup>2</sup> The **WEST WING** (1981) was designed by the architectural firm of I.M. Pei, and Partners. Pei, a native of China, and an MIT graduate, also designed the John Hancock Building in the Back Bay as well as the Green and Wiesner Buildings on the MIT campus, the new West Wing of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the new entrance and underground additions to the Louvre, in Paris, and many other notable structures worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> For more details, see, e.g. [MFA, Illustrated Handbook](#).

advancement of knowledge and learning, the MFA (like MIT) evidently is involved in a wide range of **value-laden activities**. (Can you think of some examples?)

Reflecting on your feelings about this experience in advance, please include consideration of the significance to you of the conjunction of the following collection of facts: You are visiting the MFA as an MIT undergraduate student on a field trip in a class that is advertised as dealing “feelings” and related things of an affective character, and the class is around half way through reading ZAAMM. The first half of the book has ended with the narrator (author?) almost screaming with frustration at the elusiveness of the key concept of “quality.” What, if anything, is the field trip experience teaching you that might be of value in your future personal or professional life?

In approaching these questions, please bear in mind what has previously been said in class about the existence both of multiple perspectives and some general principles underlying any effort to inquire seriously into the organization (component parts; internal/external relations) and development (evolution/history; epigenesis/phylogenesis/ontogenesis) of human systems across a wide range of instances (e.g. human organisms, human artworks, human artifacts, etc.).

**A point made before should not be forgotten: comparative and developmental investigation reveals that some key generic aspects of human systems – for example, the cognitive, affective and receptive/expressive aspects that characterize the organization and development of our personal mental lives and behavior -- are also manifested in counterpart forms at other (e.g. underlying neurobiological and surrounding social and cultural) levels.**

If this actually is the case, then you should be able to discern their aesthetic counterparts in your encounters with and reactions to works of art (among other things). By extension, the same applies to what we know and can say about the organization and development of human social systems (including, of course, social institutions like families and clubs, churches, temples, teams, museums, schools, colleges, universities, corporations, etc.

How does this apply to the MFA? One obviously highly value-laden aspect of a museum's business (raison d'être) is that of defining, acquiring and exhibiting **quality** works in the general domain of the *fine arts*. What, precisely, does that mean, in terms of what you understand as “the power to give names and to enforce definitions”?

We have reminders that these value laden questions are not merely or even mainly “academic.”

OK. But,

### **WHAT IS "ART"?**

My copy of a recently-published edition of the Random House Dictionary offers no less than 16 definitions and examples, almost all of which are obviously worthy of our consideration:

**1.** the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance. **2.** the class of objects subject to aesthetic criteria; works of art collectively, as paintings, sculptures, or drawings: a museum of art; an art collection. **3.** a field, genre, or category of art: Dance is an art. **4.** the fine arts collectively, often excluding architecture: art and architecture. **5.** any field using the skills or techniques of art: advertising art; industrial art. **6.** (in printed matter) illustrative or decorative material: Is there any art with the copy for this story? **7.** the principles or methods governing any craft or branch of learning: the art of baking; the art of selling; **8.** the craft or trade using these principles or methods. **9.** skill in conducting any human activity: a master at the art of conversation. **10.** a branch of learning or university study, esp. one of the fine arts or the humanities, as music, philosophy, or literature. **11. arts, a.** (used with a singular v.) the humanities: a college of arts and sciences. **b.** (used with a plural v.) See **liberal arts**. **12.** skilled workmanship, execution, or agency, as distinguished from nature. **13.** trickery; cunning: glib and devious art. **14.** studied action; artificiality in behavior. **15.** an artifice or artful device: the innumerable arts and wiles of politics. **16.** Archaic. science, learning or scholarship ...

What is "Fine" in the case of the fine arts? Who knows? Who is to say?

In the years since the MFA was first established, its resources, the quality of the collections, the beauty and elegance of its galleries and other public places and the range of the services it offers to visitors (and the surrounding

community) have all expanded significantly in scope and grandeur and monetary value. With the recent opening of the “Art of the Americas” Wing, the MFA enters the ranks of the world’s first-class museums of art. OK, its still not nearly as big and well-endowed and highly regarded as, say, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, or the Louvre Museum in Paris, but it famously houses outstanding collections of Ancient African (e.g. Egyptian and Nubian), Mediterranean (e.g. Greek and Roman), Middle Eastern (e.g. Mesopotamian, Babylonian, Iranian), Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Korean Oceanic), as well as more recent Western European and American works (i.e. art objects, including sculptures, paintings, prints, drawings, furniture, and decorative arts, including masks, tools, weapons, utensils, etc.).

How are acquisition and exhibition decisions currently being made?

What is the MFA for? What does it do?

Whose values does it represent?

What can an exploration of the form and content and history and *modus operandi* of the MFA teach us about the worldviews and valuesystems and lifestyles prevailing in contemporary Boston (US, “western,”) society?

Is the current economic situation adversely affecting the museum’s ability to fulfill its mandate?

### CLASSICAL = INTELLECTUAL; ROMANTIC = EMOTIONAL

By an argument that we have already begun to consider elsewhere, we find **human mental life** comprised of two distinct yet deeply interrelated aspects, one associated with rational thought and which we connote as cognitive and the other associated with intuition and “feelings” or emotions -- affective; (another counterpart juxtaposition: classical and romantic).

Not surprisingly, art historians long have long recognized the existence of these two corresponding modes of artistic expression. Further to the point: Just as individual artists have sometimes moved back and forth and used more or less emotional or intellectual approaches, so too has the art of different periods. The image on the following page is drawn from a current art history text. Although oversimplified, it usefully suggests that – since Ancient times, transgenerational movements from one extreme to the other have long tended to occur in cycles, with quickening shifts in relatively recent times and with both extremes existing concurrently at present.

Thus, in the extreme, the romantic or affectively charged approach is both highly expressive and deeply impressionistic in the sense that it aims to evoke intense personal involvement by the viewer. Toward this end, romantic art commonly involves fairly intense, active and warm (sometimes brightly colorful) interpretation of the subject, with strong intimations of movement (often violent or exaggerated), much interest in stressing natural features and a definitely personal and intimate approach by the artist to the subject.

By contrast, (and, again, at its most extreme), a classical or intellectual approach is cool, detached, reserved, parsimonious, realistic, and analytical.. It places great value on formal elements of design, composition, symmetry, lends itself much more readily to a cool, literal or rational interpretation, and conforms more closely to conventional rules by which priority is given to neat simple and clean arrangements in proper proportions. It values both narrative and compositional considerations most highly and is not primarily intended to convey impressions that evoke strong feelings or emotions.

That having been said, you should not be surprised to discover many cases in which what you experience as the strongly felt psychological impact of your encounter with a given work turns out on further consideration to be due to an artful blending of classical and romantic elements.

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NOTE: Each year, a bit more than a week before the field-trip, I go to the MFA and check to confirm the locations of the objects to be viewed. Displays are constantly appearing and disappearing!. For years the MFA has been undergoing a major renovation and expansion. Several of the major exhibition spaces are temporarily closed and many notable works have either been placed in storage or have been moved to other locations within the museum. This has necessitated some major yearly revisions in the field-trip itinerary. I write these words on Sunday, Feb. 10 in the immediate aftermath of the big blizzard, and hope to be able to make the trip tomorrow.

The MFA portion of the field trip consists of an **ARRIVAL AND INTRODUCTION**, followed by **TWO MAIN PHASES**. Each **PHASE** has a different goal and involves somewhat different methods of procedure.

### **ARRIVAL: 7:20 pm**

Feel free to leave bulky jackets and coats, heavy bookbags, and other weighty personal/professional belongings on the bus or at the MFA checkroom just inside the Huntington Avenue entrance under the Grand Stairway.

See MFA Floor Plans at <http://www.mfa.org/visit/plan-your-visit/floorplans>. Notice that the bottom is south. Upper edge is NORTH.

Within the MFA, this itinerary guides you on a long and roughly chronological developmental sequence that might be said to begin in "the dark backward and abysm of time" (Shakespeare – See "TIMESCALES" Handout).

### **WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING?**

**PHASE ONE** (1 hour and 40 minutes -- 7:30 pm-9:10 pm) is divided into THREE main parts. To complete the entire exercise you will pass through a substantial portion of the MFA, getting a synoptic overview of the place and having your attention drawn (all too briefly) to a series of **31** specific objects and/or areas representing various eras, traditions genres and subjects relevant to our "inquiry into values". Try to visit the designated sites (sights) in the indicated sequence. As already noted, completing the three parts of **PHASE ONE** should take around 100 minutes. This "solo whirlwind tour" approach is intended, in part, to provide you with a general overview of the periods and cultures and genres represented in its many halls and galleries. In the process, this guide will draw your attention to a mere 28 specific objects selected from the "on display" fraction of the museum's collection of more than 2 million objects!

You will have a lot of territory to cover in **PHASE ONE**.<sup>4</sup>

We suggest a strategy for those of you who want to derive a substantial educational benefit from this experience: Be prudent. Pace yourself carefully. In addition to doing this first part of the exercise alone -- incommunicado -- solo, don't allow yourself to become unduly diverted between indicated objectives. Spending, on average, at least one or two thoughtful moments with each of the 26 areas/objects that you are being asked to examine in **PHASE ONE**. Try to minimize diversions.

The prescribed path will take you through a substantial fraction of the museum's galleries and exhibit areas (excluding the newly-opened "Art of the America's" Wing!). You should expect to be tempted to focus your attention on various objects along the way. Feel free to do so. But only briefly. Try to resist becoming sidetracked. As you move into and through the MFA, please don't forget that it is a public place and that our fieldtrip is an official MIT academic activity. WALK. DO NOT RUN. Let's all try to represent MIT responsibly, as members of one academic community visiting another: We are exploring the MFA for MIT educational purposes. We are here to learn by looking: DON'T TOUCH ANY OBJECTS ON DISPLAY; RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHER MFA VISITORS; IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, OBEY

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<sup>4</sup> As a rough guide to the scale of the space you will be traversing in **PHASE ONE**, consider this: yesterday (Monday) shortly after 5th the museum opened, it took my wife and me around 20 minutes to traverse the indicated **PHASE ONE** distance in its entirety. Our pace was quite vigorous, and we didn't pause to make any detailed inspections of any of the indicated areas and objects.

## INSTRUCTIONS OF MUSEUM STAFF MEMBERS.

As already noted, the principal aim of **PHASE ONE** is to provide you with a broad, if necessarily somewhat superficial, schematic overview of the museum as a whole by surveying some of its notable contents in a roughly chronological sequence. At the same time we will be drawing your attention to a particular subset of works illustrative of the issues of central concern to us as manifested in a diversity of cultures and periods and genres represented in the MFA's collections.

If you are physically challenged in a way that will make it difficult or impossible for you to easily make your way through the MFA on foot, please let us know in advance, and we will try to help you make some alternative arrangements.)  
An abbreviated chronology/timetable for the trip is included on **pages 2 and 3 (above)** – See **Timescales document for more detail.**

You should also have some idea in advance of what you are going to do from 8:10-8:30 pm with item

### •13: See pp 29-32 below

In **PHASE TWO** there will be a distinct change of pace. You can slow down, reflect a bit and then begin focusing on some aspect(s) of your MFA experience which you have thus far found to be intellectually and/or emotionally "affecting" (for better or worse). Focus, if you like, on some particular work or on a historical period, cultural tradition, or genre. **PHASE TWO** will take about 30 minutes. Everyone should thus be able complete the entire field-trip exercise in the time allotted.

Admission to the MFA was always free to all until around a decade ago. It is still free (at any time) to MIT students with valid ID. Be prepared to show your MIT ID to the security guard at the point of entry. You will be handed a little metal badge. Please put it on and wear it prominently displayed during your visit. (Optional: keep wearing it daily at MIT until our next class and keep track of any remarks that get made or questions that get asked about it.) Keep track as well of any relevant conversations that you have with others about any aspect of the field trip experience.) Are you "traveling light?" Have you got your eyeglasses, your JOURNAL and something to write with? Ascend the main stairway and look around you

•1 On the Mall in front of the Huntington Entrance: Dallen "Appeal to the Great Spirit"  
(Note that the following early postcard labels it "The Great White Spirit." What does this suggest to you?)

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

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Here and in what follows, occasionally pause to reflect on the implications, if any, that you are inclined to draw about the concept of **quality** as it relates to **art** and **technology**.

As already noted, "history," in our (so-called "western") tradition, is roughly coextensive with "recorded history," and that is commonly said to begin with the Neolithic or "new stone" age agriculture-based urban civilizations of the ancient Near East between 6,000 and 8,000 years ago (**or 23:59:47 – 13 seconds before the present, according to the appended TimeScales document**).

## **PART ONE: ANCIENT ROOTS OF THE “WESTERN” TRADITION**

Allow about 40 mins. (7:30-8:10 pm).

We use the term "history" in reference to situations in which there is a more or less conscious and deliberate (narratized) remembrance of things past. The term thus implies or presupposes the existence of a human tradition that has been transgenerationally maintained and communicated.

Needless to say, the boundary line between human "history" and “prehistory” is inevitably "fuzzy." For many of us who are or aspire to be scientists, technologists, engineers, architects (and planners), managers (and financiers) there is a prevailing tendency to trust conclusions only insofar as they are arrived at via rational and quantitative methods of procedure of the kinds that ostensibly characterize the so-called "hard" sciences. (This is classical!) Our credulousness in this respect engenders, in turn, a sometimes quite un-self-critical intolerance for the "softness" or "fuzziness" or “vagueness” or “indefiniteness” of such things – “feeling” characteristics normally associated with all things romantic.

Our values subjectively inform our opinions, shaping our attitudes, engendering and reinforcing our biases. By way of example, consider the affective intensity with which some scientists tend to maintain that “feelings” and “values” have no proper place in the substantive content of science or the scientific inquiry process.

The position taken here is that fuzziness is itself a neurobiologically, psychologically and socioculturally inescapable fact of human experience. As a result, a modicum of ambiguity (uncertainty, complementarity, relativity, etc.) is inherent in all epistemological, axiological and methodological ideals of modern experimental science. This ambiguity also inevitably attends all of our best-intended efforts to precisely define (e.g.) the boundaries of living systems. This is a difficult idea to accept. The point is worth pursuing into the realm of natural human languages.

In their highly informative Historical Introduction, the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary (1927) have the following to say about "the vocabulary of ... widely diffused and highly cultivated natural human languages:"

“The Vocabulary ... is not a fixed quantity circumscribed by definite limits. The vast aggregate of words and phrases ... presents, to the mind that endeavors to grasp it as a definite whole, the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but to lose itself imperceptibly in the surrounding darkness. In its constitution, it may be compared to one of those natural groups of the zoologist or botanist, wherein typical species forming the characteristic nucleus of the order, are linked on every side to other species, in which the typical character is less and less distinctly apparent, till it fades away in an outer fringe of aberrant forms which merge imperceptibly in various surrounding orders, and whose position is ambiguous and uncertain. For the convenience of classification, the naturalist may draw the line which bounds a class or order, outside or inside of a particular form; but Nature has drawn it nowhere. ... And there is absolutely no defining line in any direction. ...

The language presents yet another undefined frontier when it is viewed in relation to *time*. The living vocabulary is no more permanent in its constitution than definite in its extent. It is not today what it was a century ago, still less what it will be a century hence. Its constituents are in a state of slow but incessant dissolution and renovation. ...

... And the farther back we go, the more imperfect are the records, the smaller is the fragment of the actual Vocabulary that we can recover.”

**(The proposition to consider is that this is the situation regarding our understanding of systems more generally.)**

**•2 BEGINNINGS – According to the Cosmic Calendar (see Appended TIMELINE) it is 12/31 at 23:59:00 – that is: 26,500 yrs –883 human generations –a mere minute – ago by the cosmic clock.**

**MFA ITEM NEEDED TO FOCUS ON HERE** No living memory links us with the origins of art. (Let alone the origins of our species, our planet, solar system and universe.<sup>5</sup>) Just as we know very little about the lives of the first human users of tools or fire, so, we know next to nothing about the people who made the first flaked rock tools (see below) or the earliest painters whose images covered the walls of caves, some 20,000 years ago, in what is now France.

The creators of ancient artifacts and images like the ones you see here may have had no written language and surely must have been living highly challenging lives amid many and varied inclemencies. But they were not ever without some form of culture. They had no books, no cameras, no ball-point pens, no computers, no iron, no steel, no silicon, no electricity, no electronics, no tv, no ipods or cell-phones. But they knew everything they needed to know to live transgenerationally sustainable social lives among others of their own kinds in extended families, abiding by or deviating from beliefs, values and practices prevailing and managing to equip themselves with tools and techniques that enabled survival. They lived on the same planet as we do, but probably had a less panoptic view of the world they lived in. For they had no audiovisual aids, no electronic devices, no instantaneous (all-pervasive and highly invasive, tightly corporately controlled) communications media technologies.

Yet, it is tempting to think that they also must have had something resembling what we today call science (the “know what”) and the material technologies (the “know-hows” and the “how tos”) needed to survive.

Can you see the world as they saw it? It is hard to imagine how their mental activity and behavior might have resembled and differed from ours. Can we be at all sure that they possessed mental and behavioral characteristics (e.g. intellectual capacities aesthetic sensibilities sensory and motor abilities (skills? aptitudes? inclinations? etc.) like ours?

Accompanying and perhaps facilitating the spread of the first modern humans across Europe was a distinctive stone-and-bone technology called the Aurignacian industry. Aurignacian tools include split-based spear points made of bone and stone as well as a type of engraving tools called burins. In the eyes of many archeologists, Aurignacian and later Upper Paleolithic tools, despite their wider variety and regional variability, fall easily into clear categories, unlike the more uniform Middle Paleolithic technology associated with Neanderthals and, in the Middle East, with early anatomically modern humans. As opposed to the "one tool does all" approach to technology among Neandertals, as one authority notes, "When you get to modern humans, it's like going to a hardware store." They left signs in the form of decorated artifacts. Presumably they meant those signs to mean something and knew what those signs meant to them. But they left us no written interpretations, and their messages are at best imperfectly understood by us.

Cyril Stanley Smith, the late MIT Institute Professor of Metallurgy, and a noted authority on the history of materials science and technology searched the world for the earliest evidence of human knowledge regarding the nature and behavior of materials. What he found goes back to prehistoric times and is coextensive with the oldest surviving human artifacts. That is, to objects of the kind commonly sought after by and displayed in fine art museums!

Some of the oldest pieces in the MFA collection are on display in the narrow Gallery (105) that runs eastward from the southeast corner of the rotunda. How would you characterize these objects?

As the interdependence and trade between rural farmers and urban dwellers increases, the earliest cities -- the first agriculture-based urban societies -- begin to emerge. And with them comes the art of writing -- thus signaling (in our traditionally eurocentric way of thinking about it), the world development toward "higher" (literate, monumental) civilizations. In any case, while it is now generally believed that the most likely "birthplace" of humanity lies elsewhere (to the south, in central/southern Africa, most likely), it is to the "cradle" of our civilization that we must look if we want to find the "beginning of history." (And the cradle includes many lands in “the news of the day”).

As far as is known, this aspect of the development of our species begins sometime during the earlier part of the fourth millennium before the present era, in the presently much-troubled region we today call the "Middle-East," just north and west of the gulf variously called "Arabian" or "Persian" -- in the fabled precincts of Babylonia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia - - when a mysterious people of unknown provenance -- called by scholars the *Sumerians* -- began settling the fertile mudlands of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, in present-day war-torn Iraq.

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<sup>5</sup> This issue is discussed in the appended Timescales handout.

By **5500 years ago, (12/31 @ 23:59:49 BP)** they had established clusters of little, brick-built city-states -- Ur, Kish, Lagash, Shuruppak, Uruk, Ubaid, Nippur, etc. Each of these was organized around a monumental temple compound where the presiding priests (legend tells us) invented the arts of writing and reckoning and devised a remarkably exact science of astronomical observation, which revealed the cosmos to be ordered in ways that are mathematically expressible! **It is ten seconds before midnight.**

Proceed East through Gallery 105 and turn right into Gallery 111 and left into Gallery 109.

**•3: ANCIENT IMAGES OF LIFE IN DEATH:** the MUMMIES! (Galleries 109-111) We know next to nothing about Ancient notions of “mind,” but we can draw a few inferences about “ancient neuropsychology” from early accounts of the cavalier manner in which Egyptian embalmers treated the brains of the corpses they were preparing for mummification. How do Ancient Egyptian attitudes toward the bodies of their royal dead relate to our understanding of what they thought about the relative importance of the contents of the cranial and thoracic/abdominal cavities?

Egypt's Old Kingdom or Pyramid Age spans slightly more than 500 years (i.e. 2780-2258 BC.) and corresponds to the time between the founding of the Third and the fall of the Sixth Dynasties. Overall, it is a period characterized by an absolute concentration of authority and wealth in the hands of a royal household headed by a man whose social status was that of a god. . In the Fourth Dynasty (2680-2565 BC.) a maximum level of central political power was reached, symbolized in material form by the building of the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza, now situated on the Egyptian desert some 10 miles west of the modern City of Cairo. The construction of pyramids, tombs and temples on such a tremendous scale had a great impact on the life of the Egyptian people. Indeed, the Pyramid Age was marked (as might be expected) by the neglect of much-needed public works, the dissipation of national wealth, and the breakdown of material infrastructure. Some observers have drawn a parallel to more recent developments, including the impact of -cold war- military/industrial expenditures on the social and material infrastructure of the contemporary US and (former) USSR It is uncertain whether or to what extent the causes of the decline in Egypt were famine or plague or internal strife or some combination thereof, but, in any case, a complete breakdown of law and order occurred and the Sixth Dynasty was followed by a period of political chaos.

Proceed to **•4: Gallery 110**

The lion frieze (below) and the map inlaid in the floor. Note that many of the objects in this room are from ancient Iraq and Iran and that many of them date back to the height of the first great Sumerian civilizations, 5,300 years or 177 generations ago.



Frieze is in public domain.

**By some 4,000 years (133 generations) ago: Hammurabic legal codes in Babylonia (Iraq); Times of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt; *Book of the Dead*; *Edwin Smith Medical Papyrus*.**

**Exit Gallery 110 and head for the foot of**

•5: The Grand Stairway and the UPPER ROTUNDA. In a sense, we are interrupting the chronological order here. The artworks around the walls and on the ceiling are the work of John Singer Sargent. They were begun in 1917. But the themes depicted are truly ancient. What do you make of the imagery and symbolism that is on view here? Throughout the end of the 19th century, comparisons (and conflicts) between *romantic* and *classical* perspectives figured prominently in discussions going on in literary, artistic, academic and cultural circles in New England and elsewhere. Much here treats of these ancient themes. On the middle left ceiling panel, (see figure below left) Sargent depicts *Apollo* (the sun god) presiding over a musical contest between the two. On the left, representing all that is romantic and sensuous in the arts since the times of the ancients, is a naked *Dionysus* with *Pan* and the whole of living nature backing him up. On the right, representing the classical perspective a virginal maiden – the archetypal embodiment (in the western tradition) of the ethereal values of goodness and truth, beauty, purity, innocence and virtue -- gestures toward the heavens, supported from behind by a seated *Athena* (goddess of knowledge and war) who here appears at the moment to be pushing her own more warlike aspects into the background. See also, *Psyche and Eros* (below middle) and *And Apollo and the Muses* (below right).



Images are in public domain.

We now return to **EGYPT IN THE PYRAMID AGE**: The larger **Egyptian Gallery** immediately to the east of the upper rotunda contains what a museum brochure calls, "the finest collection of Old Kingdom Egyptian art outside of the Cairo Museum." Egyptian art is, of course, African art, and the works on display here show some striking continuities with the Nubian material that is on view elsewhere in the museum.

Of the many remarkable objects in this **Egyptian Gallery**, there are two to which you should pay particular attention:

•6: The pair statue of KING MYCERINIUS -- third and last of the Pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty -- and his wife, QUEEN KHAMERERNEBTY II. This is regarded as one of the finest and best preserved examples of ancient Egyptian art anywhere. Nobility is here blended with intimacy in one of the most famous of all works of this period. This piece actually is part of a grouping that embodies -- together with the mummies -- ancient Egyptian ideas about the "here and now" and the "hereafter."



Image is in public domain.

•7:

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

This object was made more than 4000 years ago! What can be learned about the worldviews and value systems of the ancients from an examination of ancient artifacts? Scores of human generations and innumerable cultural transformations separate us from them. Are we still capable of cognitively and affectively connecting with them? Looking at these artifacts in the only way we can -- e.g. with our own eyes and in our own time -- can we see anything bespeaking "quality" in these ancient artifacts. (If not, why not? if so, how? and in what respects?). More to the point, as students of affect, what can we read from these objects regarding the sensibilities of the people whose society produced them? What can be reasonably conjectured about the minds and hands (*mens et manus*) of the people to whom these objects were something other than ancient artifacts in a modern-day museum? Think about the beliefs, the values (e.g. aesthetic, ethical, etc.), the history of those people. Consider the level of anatomical knowledge likely to exist in a society where the embalming of corpses is a practice combining scientific and technical knowledge of the structure of human bodies and the behavior of materials, while remaining rooted in religious faith. Be on the lookout for any resonances/dissonances between what you see here (on the one hand) and what your own artistic/ aesthetic sensibility tells you; can you find any evidence here to support (or refute) the conclusion that people possessing high quality materials science and technology existed in Africa 4000 years ago? Is it surprising to you to discover that North African and Middle- (or Near-) Eastern sculptors and stone masons, and allied crafts people living and working in the Middle East in the Fourth and Third Millennium, BCE had already mastered not only the difficult technique of massive stone construction but had also solved the problem of carving anatomically correct and emotionally expressive hard stone figures and heads?

Walk east through the **Egyptian Galleries** to the far end and exit. Turn left and then immediately right (South). Traverse Galleries 209, 210 216. Chronologically speaking, we are advancing through millennia and approaching the five or six centuries before the beginning of the present era.

Your next destinations are Galleries 212A and 213, containing works from **CLASSICAL GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY**.

As Pirsig tells us, we find among the Ancient Greeks, the beginnings of the philosophical frame of reference within which (according to his nameless narrator in *ZAAMM*), his alleged alter ego, Phaedrus, set out (wolf-like), to "pursue the ghost of rationality."

Reference has already been made to the still earlier existence of a richly symbolic and enduringly meaningful Greek **CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY** – most of which is much older than anything that has come down to us in material form from the Ancient Greeks. In other words, long before the advent of anything in the way of "natural philosophy" or "technology" there existed an orally transmitted body of traditional lore full of amazing occurrences and supernatural personages and wisdom traditions.

In the *Iliad*, -- an exemplar of this genre -- the blind bard Homer (below), offers a poetically vivid and lively account of a transgenerationally inherited series of myths or legends whose origins are lost in the "dark and backward abyss". In Homeric lore, humans and other personages (some of them supernatural) interact in memorable episodes or vignettes or encounters relating to things and events of a spiritual, folkloric, ritual, and fantastic nature going on at the interface between earthly and otherworldly dominions. Ancient Greek philosophers and artists and natural scientists grounded much of their own approach to certain subjects and themes in this tradition.



Image is in public domain.

More to the point: it is out of the cultural framework of Ancient Greece that our whole – self-consciously “western” mode of rational discourse has grown.

We likewise owe to the Ancient Greeks the background and context for our exploration of such abstract subjects as the idea of "mind" and the careers of both the **CLASSICAL** and the **ROMANTIC** perspectives in philosophy. We begin our examination of these borrowings in the **Greek Gallery** on the second floor in the south eastern corner of the museum.

Four objects in these two rooms are of particular interest to us in this connection. **Allow 10 minutes.**

The first is **•8:**

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.



Image is in public domain.

•9: The second object is located around the middle of the gallery. It is the armless statue of Athena Parthenos. (see page after next) Partheno- is a combining form literally meaning “without fertilization.” In Athena’s case, the name entails a double meaning. The first reference is to her –masculine virgin birth. To be more precise: she was said to have sprung, fully formed and fully armed, – without female involvement in her conception and birth – from the forehead of her –father, Zeus, first and foremost of the Olympian Gods of the Ancient Greek Pantheon. According to the myth she emerged uttering a war-whoop which resounded in heaven and earth. The second reference is to her as a maiden (virgin) goddess -- the goddess of both war and knowledge!. Apart from Athens, to which she gave her name, there were temples dedicated to her, as protectress, in the citadels of many Greek cities and towns. Her attributes were distinctly both masculine and war-like: her emblems were the spear, the helmet and the aegis (a shield or breastplate). (We also know her, of course, as the namesake of MIT’s campus-wide educational computing system. This statue is a Roman copy of a much larger version that filled the Parthenon (see below) from floor to ceiling. The “original” is credited to the Greek sculptor Phidias sometime between 447 and 438 BC.

As already mentioned, Greek mythology eventually informed and gave rise to a more secular "natural philosophy" whose adherents and practitioners were priests/professors of a kind. Most were more or less self-conscious "teachers" and (philos sofias = devotees/lovers of wisdom). The third object:

In the gallery now closed in the southeasternmost corner of the museum, there normally stands a bust supposedly of a particularly notable one -- the fabled Socrates (469 to 399 BC.).

This old battered head sat on a pedestal near a model of the Parthenon (see below). It was found at Athens and is believed to be a copy made in Roman times of an original done some 70 years after his death (399 BCE) by the Greek sculptor Lysippos.

Socrates' contemporaries and followers included Herodotus, Alcmaeon of Croton, Hippocrates of Cos, Aristophanes, Plato, Archimedes, and Euclid. Two of his students and disciples, Xenophon and Plato, authored many texts in which their fabled teacher is described. (Not always in consistent terms.) In the case of the better-known Platonic Socrates, the great man is repeatedly found in conversation with various members of his (overwhelmingly male) coterie of devoted followers. From a pedagogical point of view it is pertinent to realize that many of the more influential of the platonic *Dialogues* are set in the preeminently male social contexts of informal eating and drinking parties. To such gatherings were given the name: *Symposium* (the prefixes *sym=syn=sys* = "together). Among this group of dialogues is one entitled the Phaedrus. This may be taken as a sign of the influence of Plato on Pirsig, -- on his narrator, and the latter's alter ego. It is also worth noting in passing that the educational tradition of philosophical discourse that Plato exemplified has continued, more or less uninterrupted, to the immediate present.

In this historically mostly masculine tradition, Socrates represents a new kind of hero. Plato wrote several *Dialogues* concerning his indictment, trial, conviction and execution. Do you know the dialogues entitled *Apology*, *Phaedo* and *Crito*?

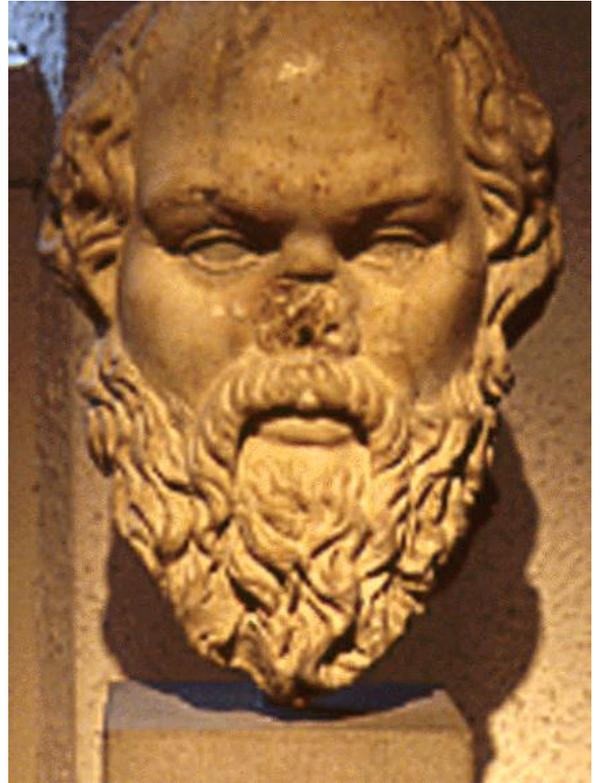


Image is in public domain.



Painting is in public domain.

–*The Death of Socrates*,– by Jacques Louis David, 1787, NY, The Metropolitan Museum of Art:

From the fourth of our selected objects in this room, you can get some sense of the environment in which the Athenians of Plato's and Socrates' time lived and worked.

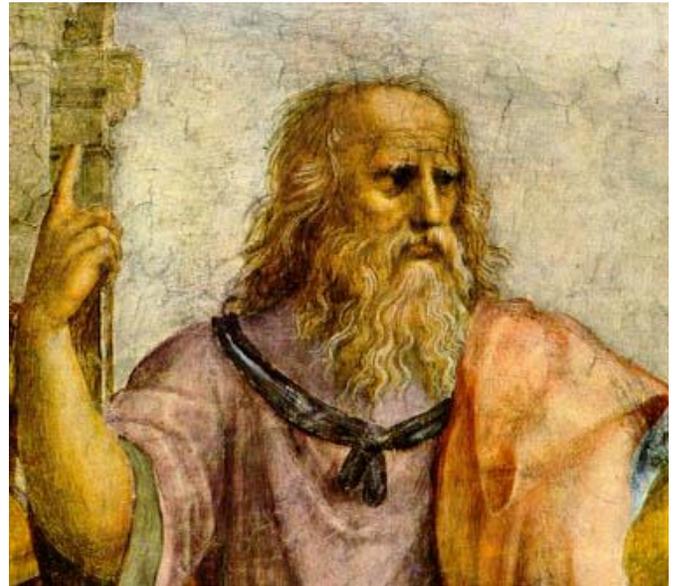
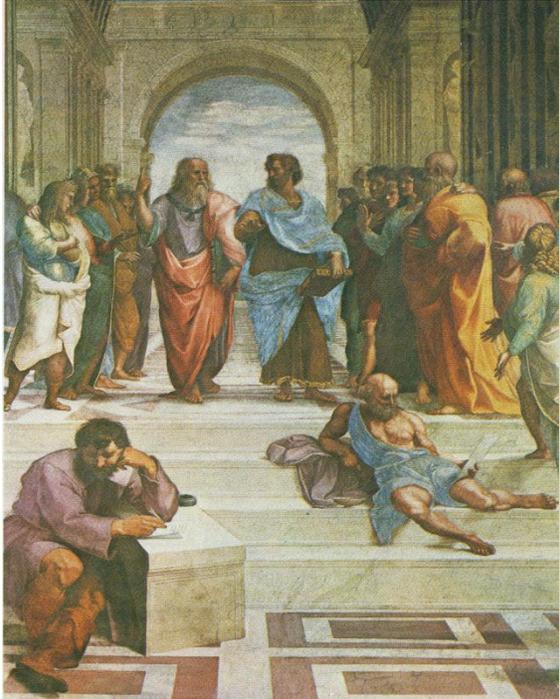
Acropolis is the name of the hill on whose flattened top stood the great temple (the Parthenon), along with other significant buildings. It was at the foot of the Acropolis -- in the residential and commercial center of the city, the Agora -- that Socrates and his contemporaries met and held dialogue. Just as it is mainly from Plato that we get our image of the fabled Socrates, so it is from Plato's most illustrious student, Aristotle, that we get the earliest surviving articulation of the idea that there is "one and only one" fully creditable mode of scientific thinking: To be more precise, the modern western scientific perspective is predicated in large part on the categorical (either/or) logic that has been inherited from Aristotle. Notably, it was upon this "perfectly rational" categorical (either/or) logic that Aristotle predicated his "law of the excluded middle," and which – muddled as it may be -- remains, to this day, the centerpiece of what has since become the modern scientific paradigm.<sup>6</sup>

In effect, it is to this Aristotelian logic that Pirsig is referring when he has his narrator discuss "the knife."

Is there any reason to believe in the availability of a more inclusive (relativistic, complementaristic,) kind of scientific understanding?.

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<sup>6</sup> Much, much, later, in the 17th century, the French philosopher/mathematician, Rene Descartes would take both of these ideas, (categorical logic and the excluded middle) and couple them with the further idea of the "Archimedean Point," thereby creating what has come to be called (rather imprecisely) **THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD**. But that is another story for another time. Suffice it for present purposes merely to point out that what began with Socrates and Plato and Aristotle, eventually became cartesian/newtonian rationalism, mechanism and reductionism that, taken as a whole, forms the quintessentially categorical (either/or) basis of the CLASSICAL/ROMANTIC SPLIT and is the main source of the worldview, valuesystem and lifestyle that we know as "modern."



Paintings are in public domain.

R: Rafael, *School of Athens*, Details. The men depicted as walking and talking on left are intended to be Plato (detail right) and Aristotle.

Pass next into the **Roman Gallery (213)**.

Centuries have passed since the days of Periclean Athens. We are here approaching the threshold of the present (Common or Christian era); Ptolemaic astronomy, Rise of the Roman Empire; lifetimes of Jesus, Ovid, Galen (others). Indian arithmeticians are just about now inventing the concept of “zero” and learning to use decimals.

•**10**: Capitoline Brutus.

•**11**: the posthumous portrait head of the emperor Augustus. More than just a pretty face?

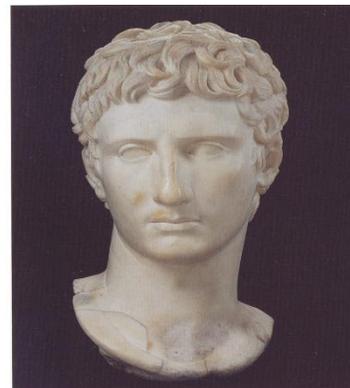


Image is in public domain.

**Exit this wing via Gallery 211 and turn left at the end into Gallery 206**

Enter the ITALIAN RENAISSANCE corridor and proceed about half way to the end.

**12: Two Madonnas:**

**On the left wall: Compare and contrast the facial expressions on the two Madonnas. What is your interpretation?**



Image is in public domain.  
MADONNA AND CHILD. Att. To Bellano, and



Image is in public domain.  
THE MADONNA IN THE CLOUDS (about 1425-35), by the Italian master Donatello

**PART TWO: ORIGINS AND ARTIFACTS IN OTHER ANCIENT TRADITIONS** (8:10-8:30 pm)

**•13:**

There are many other eras and cultures that deserve attention. Each of us has personal/social connections with one or more cultural backgrounds. Due to limitations of time, we ask you to **choose one tradition from the ten listed below (13A-K)**. We suggest (but do not require) that your choice be governed by the fact of your own cultural background.

**Allow about 20 mins.**

**13a-13f. INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA? You have a number of great options.)**

The Asian collection of the Museum of Fine Arts occupies no less than twenty-six galleries on the first and second floors of the museum. It is regarded by some as the finest overall collection of oriental art under one roof anywhere outside of Asia.

In the sixth century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama -- the historical Buddha -- founded what was destined to become a new and widely influential faith. Legend has it that he was born into a wealthy and elite Indian family, and turned away from a life of privilege in order to seek spiritual perfection or "enlightenment." The latter, according to his teachings, is a condition or state that human beings can attain or achieve through renunciation of earthly cares and desires.

**13a: INDIAN**

Buddhism began in India, and, the **Indian Gallery** used to be a good place to see some early Buddhist art. But it has been replaced by a museum gift shop (!?) Happily we can still see one early Hindu sculpture of the elephant-headed body of a boy. This is the god Ganesha; a deity traditionally regarded as a temple guardian and guide who helps the faithful to avoid or overcome obstacles encountered on the path to enlightenment. He appears here together with his two consorts -- "success" and "prosperity". The rat (below) is his mode of transportation.

In examining sculptures of this kind, it is important to understand that, in many traditional cultures, statues of gods and goddesses were regarded as both representations and physical embodiments of the depicted personage(s).-- supposedly able to see as well as to be seen by the worshipful.. The one-sidedness of this work suggests that it was probably intended to be mounted on a wall outside of a temple or temple compound. As such, it is likely to have been among the first gods to be encountered by (and to encounter) the reverent pilgrim who respectfully circles the outside of the

premises before prayerfully entering. What might Ganesha be seeing in you as you look at him this evening?



Sculpture is in public domain.

Archaeological and literary evidence indicates that Buddhism was carried from India to China during the latter years of the Han Dynasty (207 BC.-220 AD.). It extended thence to Korea and, much later, to Japan. As it spread throughout Asia (and beyond) Buddhism underwent many and varied modifications, with different Buddhas worshipped in different ways by different sects in different times and places. The MFA collection includes many images of the Buddha in a host of beautiful, fantastic, and awe-inspiring guises. In examining Asian portraits and related works for aesthetic quality, it is important to understand that the traditional eastern notion of portraiture differs from the western. Whereas the latter commonly concentrates on the individuality of the person depicted and centers on the question of likeness (i.e. what we usually want to know about it is whether the image accurately represents the subject) the former tradition is one in which, by contrast, individuals define themselves through their positions within the family, social class, or religious group and their interpersonal relationships. Asian portraiture accordingly often is societally oriented and composite. In other words, the figures need to be "read" more as a depictions of general types rather than likenesses of particular individuals.

**In search of other ancient cultures?**

**Proceeding westward to the end of the Indian gallery.**

**In the southwest corner of the building you will find **13b:**  
The Korean gallery. E.g. Medical Buddha.**

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Also on this floor are (13e) Southeast Asian, (13g) Islamic, (13h) African, and (13i) Oceanic exhibits. The (13c) Japanese, (13d) Chinese and (13f) Himalayan Galleries are on the second floor.

**13c: JAPAN:** Climb the stairs to the **SECOND FLOOR** and proceed straight ahead (west) to the **Japanese Buddhist Sculpture Gallery**. This -temple room- gallery was built at the beginning of the last century, and recently refinished. It follows the traditions of eighth and ninth century Japanese Buddhist architecture. All of the statues in it are made of wood, and date from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Included among them is a portrait of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha. The goal of the faithful Buddhist is to transcend the desires and sorrows of earthly existence, through enlightenment and to thereby escape from the otherwise supposedly endless cycles of mortal reincarnation. A Bodhisattva is an enlightened one who, has chosen to remain among humankind as a guide or preceptor.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

**13.d: CHINESE:** On the second floor you will find the **Chinese Pottery Galleries, and Chinese Furniture Gallery**. Exiting via the easternmost door.

**1,500 years (50 generations) ago** -- Rome Falls; Rise of Islam; Arab Culture flourishes; Moslem Conquests.

**13e: SOUTHEAST ASIAN**

**13f: HIMALAYAN GALLERIES ARE ON THE SECOND FLOOR**

**13g: ISLAMIC:** Islamic art, flourished from the 9th through the 15th centuries Below: Persian (Iranian) plate, 12<sup>th</sup> century.



Image is in public domain.

**13h: AFRICA**

**13i: OCEANIA,**

**(20 Generations) ago – 12/31 @ 11:59:59:00 –**

1001-1500 -- 1,000 – 500 years (33-17) Generations) ago – Mayan and other Native American Civilizations Flourish; Sung Dynasty in China; Byzantine Empire in Europe and Middle East; Mongol Invasion; anti-Muslim Christian Crusades  
Columbus' Voyages.

**WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS PART OF THE EXERCISE, RETURN TO THE UPPER ROTUNDA.**

PART THREE: WESTERN TRADITIONS: (8:30 pm) (Allow about 40 minutes).

1501-1600 – 500-400 years (17-14 Generations) ago. Here begins the last second of the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the last month of Sagan’s Cosmic Year:

1543 marks the advent of Copernican Astronomy. This seems as good a point as any to serve as the “beginning” of “Modern Times”

1601-1700 --400-300 years (13-11 Generations) ago –Scientific and cultural renaissance in Europe; Voyages of Discovery and Conquest from Europe and China; Emergence of modern scientific method; Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Newton, Leibniz ...

1701-1800 -- 300-200 years (10-7 Generations) ago Large-scale colonial expansion from Europe

1801-1900 – 200-100 years (7-3 Generations) ago. Industrial Age Opens

1900-2000 – 100-0 years (3-0 Generations) ago. The 20th century

**A. EUROPE FROM THE 15<sup>TH</sup> TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY (allow 20 mins)**

The capture of Constantinople (now Istanbul) by forces of the Turkish Empire, in 1453, effectively ended a protracted period of hegemony by European merchants over commercial traffic on the long-established overland trade routes to and from India and China and the rest of the "Far East." (Notice the Eurocentrism of this geographical terminology). This loss of control triggered in Christian Europe (first in the Catholic Portugal of Prince Henry the Navigator, and later in Ferdinand and Isabella’s Catholic Spain), efforts to find alternative sea routes that would outflank the Moslems. Henry had been sending sailors south since early in the 15th century. In 1492, Spain sent Columbus in search of a westward passage to "the Indies." The Portuguese did not reach Cathay until 1498, but, by then, Columbus had already unwittingly blundered upon what would become Europe’s self-styled "New World."

In terms of its human and ecological impacts, there can be no doubt that the European "discovery" of “previously unknown” lands led to historically unprecedented kinds and degrees of genocidal violence by men whose worldviews were both incurably “romantic” and quintessentially “classical.”

**We will continue to consider European art of the Renaissance in the** William I. Koch Gallery of EARLY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS: **From the UPPER ROTUNDA, proceed northward and enter the KOCH GALLERY (250)**

The work here reflects some of what has been happening in European painting during the period preceding and during the Renaissance.

See •14: By an unidentified Flemish artist around 1620: “The Taking of Christ



Painting is in public domain.

In this dramatic close-up view of the Arrest of Christ, each person is shown reacting in the moment after Judas's kiss revealed Christ to the Roman soldiers. The soldiers seize Christ, St. Peter raises his knife to smite off the ear of an enemy, others recoil in horror. How do gestures and expressions tell the story? Light from different sources highlights hands and faces, intensifying the narrative. This artist, like many throughout Europe, adopted the classical romantic theatrical style of the Roman/Neapolitan painter Caravaggio.

Continue through the Koch gallery, exiting at the north end. Bear right around the EVANS WING stairway and Turn Right into Gallery 243 containing.

- 15** Gabriel Metsu, “Ursurer with Tearful Woman” (1656)

In the same Gallery (on table under cover, see)

- 16** Rembrandt – Artist in His Studio

Exiting the Dutch/Flemish Gallery, cross the corridor and bear left through the first and into the second 18th century European gallery (247). On the left wall as you enter: See:

- **17**: **Grotto by the Seaside in the Kingdom of Naples with Banditti, Sunset**  
1778 Joseph Wright of Derby, English, 1734–1797



Painting is in public domain.

On the south wall, see • **18**:

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

On the west wall of gallery 247, see

•**19**: Pannini, Gallery with pictures of Rome,



Painting is in public domain.

Proceed west, through the central Evans Wing Gallery displaying European Silver and enter the first of two 19<sup>th</sup> C. European Galleries. On the right hand (north) wall of the first of these galleries(251), see:

•**20**: Joseph Mallord William Turner, English,(1775-1851) Slave Ship.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

- 21:** Alexandre-Georges-Henri Reginault’s massive 1868 painting: “Automedon with the Horses of Achilles.



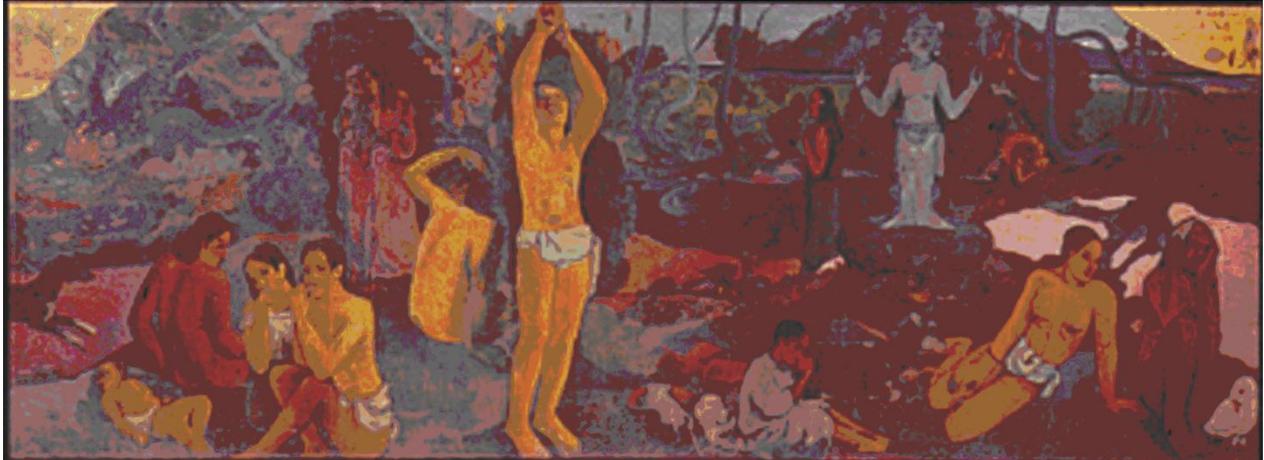
Painting is in public domain.

Continue going west, into the second of the two 19C European Galleries (252) , see, on the north wall

- 22:** Gallery 252: Leighton, Painter’s Honeymoon

Exit gallery 252, turn right and enter Gallery 255

- 23: Cezanne, "The Large Bathers"
- 24: The "monumental and enigmatic" painting in which PAUL GAUGIN (French; 1848-1903): moodily addresses "life's key questions." D'OU VENONS NOUS? -- QUE SOMMES-NOUS? -- OU ALLONS NOUS?, 1897



Painting is in public domain.

Here is a consummately romantic work. Famously, Gauguin painted it in Tahiti in one frantic month, regarded it as his masterpiece and signaled his intention that it be taken as his artistic last testament by making an unsuccessful suicide attempt immediately after its completion. Perhaps these unhappy circumstances help to explain why so many viewers who really "love" it would readily admit that it is anything but a "pretty" or "pleasant" picture. Quite the reverse, refusing to be "pretty" this work nonetheless draws us in with unspeakable feeling; does so powerfully; and leaves the questions unanswered. Precisely because these are the abiding unanswered and unanswerable questions about human nature, human origins and human destiny, people keep asking them. It is particularly so -- the historical record suggests -- in especially what appear to be perilously uncertain times like these.

### C. IMPRESSIONISTS AND POST-IMPRESSIONISTS.

Gallery 255: This gallery contains many famous, and highly popular late 19th century works. In many academic, artistic, and social circles, an awareness is growing of the extent to which perception is an actively "projective" process in which what is perceived cannot be psychologically disentangled from the point of view of the observer/perceiver. In this sense, every act of observation is inevitably "biased" by virtue of its relation to the observer's perspective. And, of course, perspectives (points of view) do not arise or exist in a vacuum; rather, they arise out of and are systematically related to other aspects of personal mental life and behavior (which are in turn influenced by prevailing worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles).

You simply don't have time on this visit to examine everything in this wonderful gallery. Most are paintings in oil on canvas and include world-class works by Van Gogh, Monet, Degas, Cassat, Renior, Pissarro, and Cezanne. How do the works in this room *affect* you?

The way we approach (and do not approach) the task of framing and asking such questions will go a long way toward determining the nature and scope of the answer(s) we come up with. Ultimately, we will find that our perceptions of artworks (like our perceptions of everything else) are part of the

ongoing process that is continuously shaping our overall mental life and behavior (including our hard won and fondly held, personal and social worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles). Feel free to reflect at some length on the meaning to you of these key questions (as you view the painting, and again, later on.)

Finally, **•25:** Pass through Gallery 258 and enter the series of galleries containing Contemporary Art. (Galleries 258-265)

It should be around 9:10 pm. This concludes **PHASE ONE**. (It should have taken about 100 minutes).

It has been a long and hurried trip, As you begin to review the events of the last 100 minutes or so, read the instructions for **PHASE TWO**:

**PHASE TWO**  
**“Art washes away the dust of everyday life”<sup>7</sup>**

Allow about 40 minutes

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection. What of Quality have you seen and experienced since arriving at the MFA?. Review the path you have taken through time and space. Reflect on what you have been asked to pay attention to, as well as what you’ve noticed on your own along the way. Think back to the beginning. What stands out? Did you come away particularly excited or depressed (intrigued, happy, pleased, amused, disturbed, annoyed, frustrated, unhappy, sad, angry, etc.) from any of your many brief encounters with any of the periods, mediums, genres, or works that you have come across during the past hour and a half of exploration?

In **PHASE TWO** You will be trying to find (or to return to) something that clearly says (or fails to say) "artistic quality" to you. If you choose, please feel free to work collaboratively with your classmates and group mates from this point onward. But stay focused. You should return to an area or object previously visited, and be prepared to remain there for awhile.

In any case, when you get to where you want to be, continue to spend the time alone. After a while, if you happen to meet up with other classmates who share some of your own affinities and interests and feelings, don’t hesitate to talk together about your respective and collective reactions. Try to be both as analytical and as speculative as possible in exchanging ideas with others involved in the same enterprise. Relate your experience to what you have previously seen or already know about your own intellectual, emotional and behavioral inclinations and your artistic or aesthetic or moral values. In other words, once you have settled on a focus, you should feel free (but certainly not compelled) to communicate with any classmates that you happen to encounter exploring the same territory. The point here is to begin focusing on some aspect(s) of your MFA experience which you find intellectually and/or emotionally "affecting" (for better or worse). Focus, if you like, on some particular work or on a historical period, cultural tradition, or genre.

What if anything meaningful to you can you say that someone else might find interesting about your experience? Can you describe some specific aspects of your own background that are related to your attitude (way of regarding) your relationship to the object(s) in question? What do you know that you can say, on the basis of your own Phase One experience? What is good? What is not good? Do you need anyone to tell you these things? (Is there a place for the study of art and art history in the MIT undergraduate curriculum?) What is your view? Do you have an opinion? Are quality experiences to be had at the MFA? Did you have one? What of (high/low) quality did you experience during phase one of our MFA field trip?

Viewers and works of art, like observers and things/objects/events observed, can be defined in "human systems" terms. (What are we talking about here?) Gradually begin thinking and talking together a bit more comprehensively and analytically about some of the reasons why your "viewing" experience has been is being and will continue to be conditioned and constrained by particulars of your own backgrounds and experiences. Feel free to illustrate (sketch) or verbally express, or otherwise show in some way, both how you are affected by the viewing experience (how it affects you; how you relate to it, etc.) and why. Does your encounter with the work in this context evoke memories of childhood? something else? What associations (if any) does the viewing experience engender in you? Are all of your feelings about the work and your relation to it equally strong? or weak? entirely positive? completely negative? Try to describe your attitude toward this encounter with the object(s) in question and with each other in relation thereto. Get more analytical: Can you identify any specific intrinsic elements or parts of your encounter with the work itself that strike you as particularly pertinent in producing your experience of it?

Can you disentangle (1) the part that particulars of your own experience, background, attitudes, etc. play in your engagement with the fieldtrip experience from (2) the influence exerted upon you by the context and the object itself?

Is it possible to situate the *quality* that you perceive?

**Can it be localized?**

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<sup>7</sup> Text of a message seen on "Sundance Channel"

Is it an attribute of the object?

Is it inherent within it, independent of our perceptions of it?

Or Is it in the proverbial "beholder's eye"?"

Could it alternatively arise out of an irreducibly interactive relationship involving (going on between/among/within) persons-in-contexts (participants/observers) (on the one hand) and the things (objects, events, etc.) observed (on the other)?

Do you regard these as reasonable (intelligible?) questions?

To what extent is the quality of your viewing experience at the MFA conditioned and constrained by your own default assumptions? By your notions of what you are "supposed to be thinking and feeling"?

9:50 pm: Return to Scharf Visitors' Center, collect belongings left at checkroom and depart Museum via Fenway entrance.

Note: in order to prepare more effectively for our next class, we need you to turn in your completed reaction form via email within 24 hours. Include the exact names and dates and precise locations within the museum of the artworks that you singled out for closer consideration. **Please include a digital photo or two for each item – please, not more than 3 photos in all.**

We also want you to give us your overall impressions of the experience of "searching for quality." Hence, in preparation for next class: (ideally, before the next meeting of your study group) write a 1-2 page reaction paper on "The quality of my MFA fieldtrip experience."

We gather at the West Wing Entrance for the return to MIT

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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences  
9.68/13 -Affect: ...-

MFA REACTION FORM

Note: in previous years, we'd have you do this at MFA before leaving: This year, we ask that you complete it as instructed and return it to us via email before Friday evening Feb 22, at 6pm.

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDY GROUP # \_\_\_\_\_

IDENTIFY ONE OR TWO "QUALITY ENCOUNTERS" Please write clearly. In cases where something is mentioned in the GUIDE, give page number. Otherwise provide information as indicated below.

• **First Item(s)**

• TITLE(S) OF WORK(S) AND DATE(S) OF PRODUCTION

\_\_\_\_\_

ARTIST – FULL NAME(S) AND BIRTH/DEATH DATES:

\_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: (WHERE IS IT EXACTLY? ON WHICH FLOOR? GALLERY? WALL?)

\_\_\_\_\_

YOUR REACTION:

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a digital photo? If so, please provide us with a copy via email

• **Second Item(s)**

TITLE(S) OF WORK(S) AND DATE(S) OF PRODUCTION

\_\_\_\_\_

ARTIST NAME(S) AND BIRTH/DEATH DATES:

\_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: (WHERE IS IT EXACTLY? ON WHICH FLOOR? GALLERY? WALL?)

\_\_\_\_\_

YOUR REACTION:

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a digital photo? If so, please provide us with a copy via email..

**(Please turn over):**

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS and FURTHER REMARKS

THE BEST AND WORST THING(S) ABOUT THE FIELDTRIP EXPERIENCE WERE/WAS

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THIS GUIDE WAS

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THE BUS RIDE TO THE MFA WAS:

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PHASE ONE WAS

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PHASE TWO WAS:

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THE TRIP BACK TO MIT WAS:

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ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS?

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9.68 Affect: Neurobiological, Psychological and Sociocultural Counterparts of "Feelings"  
Spring 2013

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