



# Reflections of Culture GALLERY GUIDE

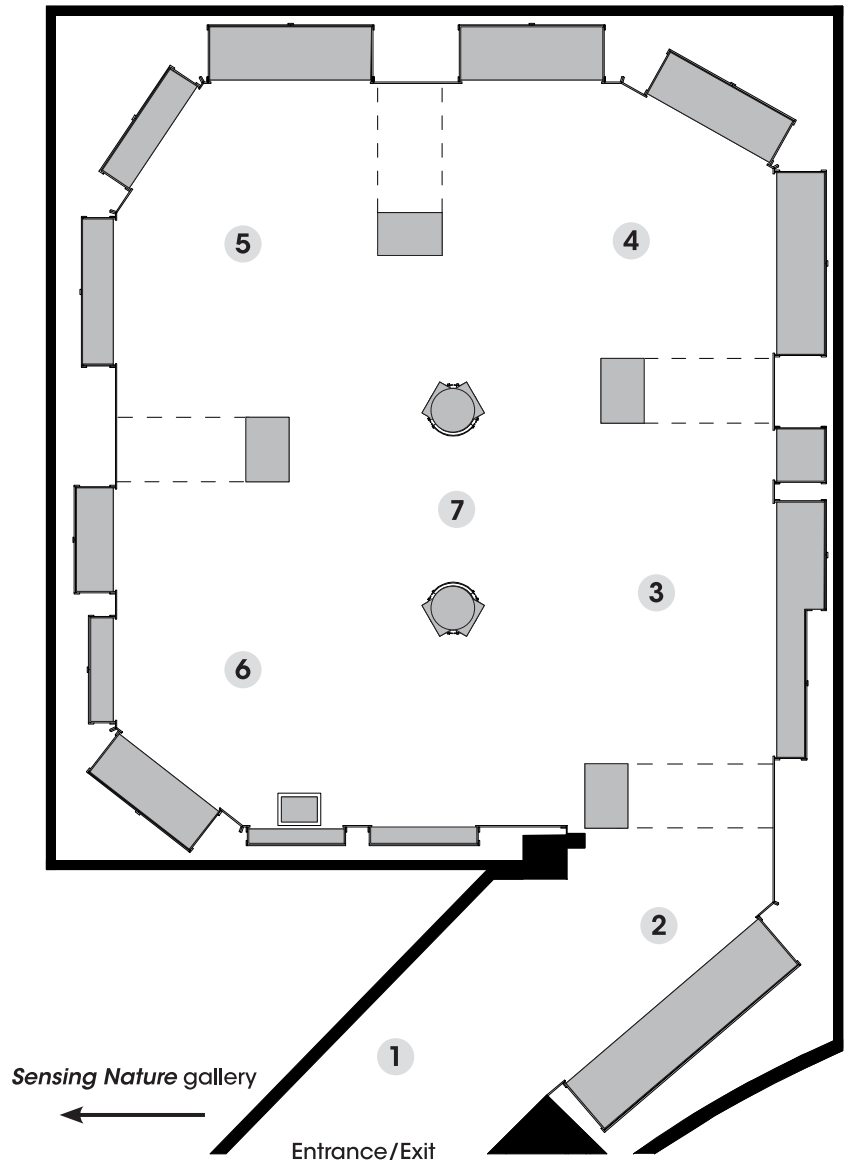
## What is this exhibition about?

*Reflections of Culture* examines how people of the world express their culture through personal adornment, including clothing, jewelry and various forms of body modification such as piercing, scarring, painting, shaping and tattooing. Adornment is an important way people express their cultural identity and an effective means of communicating social, political and economic information about themselves and the society in which they live.

## How can my class get the most out of the exhibition?

*Reflections of Culture* is self-guided. Use this gallery guide to help determine which of the exhibition sections and artifacts are most appropriate for your students. As they walk through the gallery, students should be encouraged to think about the many different ways they express their culture through the things they wear or the other ways they decorate their bodies.

Refer to the simplified exhibition diagram to the right as you read this gallery guide.





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## 1. ENTRANCE

Visitors are greeted with a wall of colorful portraits that show the diversity of human culture that exists today, including people of different ages, gender, ethnicity, nationality and religious backgrounds.

## 2. CULTURE IS...

This area introduces the term culture and the idea that culture encompasses the beliefs, values, behaviors, customs and objects that are shared by a group of people. All of these elements of culture are passed down from generation to generation. Baskets, pottery, weapons, musical instruments, religious figures and textiles are used to explore how cultural information can be expressed in the objects we create.

## 3. PERSONAL ADORNMENT: DIVERSITY OF TRADITIONS

Learn about the many different forms of adornment used around the world, including clothing, jewelry and body modification such as painting, piercing, tattooing, shaping and scarring. Visitors learn that personal adornment is an important way people express their cultural identity and an effective means of communicating social, political and economic information. This section is subdivided into two exhibition components.

**Clothing and Jewelry**—Clothing and jewelry are perhaps the most common items of adornment used around the world, but there is great diversity in the styles, designs and materials used to make these items. Be sure to look for the *Maasai hide cape*, *Miningkabau bridal headdress*, *Tibetan grooming tools* and *New Guinea forehead ornament* as examples of this diversity.

**Body Modification**—People decorate their bodies by painting, piercing, tattooing, shaping and scarring. Some of these modifications are permanent while others are temporary. Look for the *corset*, *Chinese shoes for bound feet* and *Dyak ear spools* as examples of objects associated with body modification.

## 4. GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Explore the different types of groups people belong to, and the tools and methods used by members to identify their membership or involvement with a particular group. This section is subdivided into three exhibition components.



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**Family Groups**—Family groups often use clothing or special symbols, like crests, to identify their members. Look for different types of identification used by families in this case, including the *Scottish kilt* and *Japanese kimono*.

**Ethnic Groups**—Ethnic groups share a common background, religion, language and/or nationality. Some groups wear clothing that distinguishes them from other neighboring groups. Look for the *Ladakhi headdress*, *Kuna mola blouse* and *Chinese Mandarin robe* as examples of distinctive ethnic clothing.

**Groups You Join**—Some groups we are born into, while others we join voluntarily, such as clubs and sporting teams. Personal adornment is often used by group members to display their group affiliation. Be sure to look at the *Atlanta Braves uniform*, *Shriner's fez* and *Legia button hat* as examples of group identification.

## 5. STATUS

Discover many of the variables used to determine status in cultures around the world, including age, gender, kinship, wealth and social or political power. This section is subdivided into four exhibition components.

**Rank**—People in positions of power or authority often wear specialized insignia or identifying markers so that their position or status is unmistakable to other members of that group or culture. Be sure to look for the *United States Air Force uniform*, *Solomon Island kap kap* and *Akan gold watch bracelet* as examples of these types of items.

**Marital Status**—Most world cultures have some special form of ornamentation that is worn to signify a person's marital status, including different clothing, jewelry and forms of body modification such as hairstyles, beards and tattoos. Be sure to look for the *Zulu hat*, *Indian marriage necklaces* and *photos of wedding rings and beards* as examples of this type of status.

**Wealth**—Social status is often linked to wealth, power and prestige. People in these positions often wear expensive, rare or hard to acquire items. Be sure to look for the *Cartier watch*, *Precolumbian jade ear spools* and *African copper anklets* as examples of these types of items.

**Status Detective**—This interactive area asks visitors to try and guess which item of adornment communicates the status of the four individuals pictured.



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## 6. BELIEF SYSTEMS

Examine the many ways that people around the world use personal adornment to express their beliefs about the supernatural. Objects and accompanying photographs show different types of adornment that serve as expressions of faith, highlighting the iconography, colors and materials of symbolic significance. This section is subdivided into five exhibition components.

**Ornaments of Faith**—Many of the ornaments people wear are expressions of their religious beliefs. Look for the *Kohistani child's headdress*, *saint medals* and *African plank mask* as examples of some of the many different types of adornment that can reflect the wearer's beliefs.

**Religious Attire**—Spiritual leaders are often identified by what they wear. Look for the *Buddhist monastic robe*, *Yao paper crown* and *Franciscan friar's habit* as examples of some of the items worn by religious specialists.

**Devotional Containers**—Many jewelry items are designed to hold charms, figures, verses from religious texts or even food offerings. Look for the *Tuareg amulet*, *Tibetan portable shrine* and *Saudi Arabian amulet necklace* as examples of these types of containers.

**The Language of Symbols**—Explore how an object's design, color, material or symbols can be used to express ideas about belief systems using this computer interactive.

**Symbolic Materials**—Many cultures value precious and semi-precious materials because they are believed to hold special powers. Look for the *Berber coral necklace*, *Tibetan amber necklace*, and *Navajo turquoise* and *coral squash-blossom necklace* as examples of these types of materials.

## 7. HOW DO YOU REFLECT CULTURE?

This interactive area in the center of the gallery features two columns that house four computer touch-screens. These computer interactives further explore the themes presented in the exhibition and ask the visitor about the types of adornment they wear, providing examples of the different meanings given to these items by a variety of different cultural groups. Each screen has different questions, so be sure to visit all four.