Welcome to The Memorial Art Gallery!

The Gallery is an art museum, a special place where works of art from many times and places are collected, cared for, and displayed.

The Memorial Art Gallery has nearly 1,000 works of art on view, from cultures around the world; some as old as 5,000 years!

We are always happy to welcome school groups! When you come to the Gallery...

- We have a special bus-friendly entrance just for school tours!
- Trained tour guides called docents (*DOE-sents*) will meet you at the door and show you around the Gallery.
Did you know . . . ?

Learning how to look at a work of art is a lot like learning to read.

Your docent will share interesting information, answer your questions, and help you look at and learn about the art that you see around you!

We look forward to seeing you soon!
Passport to the Past

An Introduction to the Cultures and Art of the Eastern Hemisphere

as represented in the collections of The Memorial Art Gallery
What do “BCE” and “CE” mean?

BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) refer to the same time periods as the more traditional BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, which means “The Year of our Lord”).
The ancient Middle East nurtured some of the world’s earliest cultures and civilizations. People attracted by the region’s rich river flood plains, wide grasslands, barren deserts, and forested mountains developed cooperative societies, in both fortified cities and nomadic clan groups.
The powerful Egyptian civilization reached its height between 2649 and 1070 BCE.
The arts of stone-carving, metalwork, and pottery all supported and recorded the Egyptians’ daily lives, religious practices, and funerary beliefs.
Early Chinese artists developed sophisticated pottery and bronze work for ceremonial and status objects. Elaborate burials with decorative and symbolic vessels and figures demonstrate a belief in the afterlife and the influence of ancestors on the lives and fortunes of living family members.
The Bronze Age cultures of Greece, Carthage, and Etruria vied for control of the Mediterranean Sea. Greek culture spread through colonization and trade, but also because these neighboring, and often competing, cultures admired and adopted Greek art forms and customs.
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ANCIENT ROME

Height of the Roman Empire, 27 BCE—192 CE

From the administrative, religious, and commercial capital of Rome, successive imperial dynasties spread Roman political, military, and artistic influence to create the greatest empire the world had seen.
Much of medieval Europe came under the influence of Christianity.

The arts of this period reflect Christian beliefs and practices, as the Catholic Church controlled cultural and political centers including Rome, Constantinople, and Paris.
The Islamic faith spread from western Arabia to encompass much of the medieval world. The spread of Islamic empires created art forms that reflect local traditions as well as Islamic ideals of decorative scripts and floral patterns.
Powerful Mongol rulers from northern China united huge areas of medieval Asia. Mongol rule established a relative peace, allowing east-west trade to thrive. Religious tolerance encouraged the spread of beliefs and images along these routes as well, inspiring unique regional art forms.
The European Renaissance was a period of social, educational, and financial change. Interests in science, trade, and discovery opened up opportunities for a newly rich merchant class. They took advantage of wealth and leisure to support the arts.
The unique traditional cultures of Africa share common artistic traits.
Despite modern religious and cultural influences, African arts display imaginative use of natural materials, a respect for the physical and spiritual environment, and unique ways of displaying identity and social status.
Traditional Pacific islander cultures spread across thousands of miles of ocean. Utilizing locally available materials such as raffia grasses, wood, natural dyes and pigments, shells and boar tusks, the arts of the Pacific Islands display a range of spiritual beliefs that connect closely with the natural environment.
Influence of Asia:
The Silk Road

A 5,000-mile network of trade routes known as the Silk Road connected the continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia. Caravans of pack animals carried luxury goods such as silks, spices, and porcelain to the west, returning to the east with horses, glass vessels, and carpets.
Many highly organized states existed in Africa long before the European colonial period. They maintained lucrative Saharan trade routes for gold, slaves, and kola nuts from the south, exchanged for salt, glass trade beads, and cowrie shells from the north. Many of these goods passed on to Europe and the Islamic East.
The major world religions of today — Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — spread via missionaries, traders, and travelers, as well as warfare and colonization.