How to Use This Guide When Visiting MoAD

The Where is Here Resource Guide is intended for use with students in grades 3 through 12; however, the content may need to be adjusted to meet your specific learning goals. Due to the wide spread of grade levels, many of the activities do not exactly meet the Common Core State Standards for each grade. The Student Vocabulary Sheet and Question Sheets should be used to prepare students for a focused museum visit. The Vocabulary Sheet introduces students to some of the terms they will encounter throughout the exhibition. Additional vocabulary words are found throughout the guide and are italicized and bold.

When visiting MoAD, give each of your students a copy of the Questions to Use While at MoAD to further engage them in the context of the exhibition. Be sure to have your students answer the Reflection Questions as soon as possible after your visit to the Museum. These are designed to help students think deeper about the exhibitions after they have visited MoAD.

You may choose either of the projects from the Selected Artwork Activities to complete after your visit to the Museum. Please note that while this Resource Guide strives to help students understand many of the histories which inform the work in the exhibition, we are not able to provide a comprehensive overview in such a limited number of pages. Please also note that these are presented to help teachers create lesson plans related to the exhibition themes and due to the wide range of MoAD’s visiting audience, we are not attempting to present a focused unit of lesson plans.

We sincerely hope that you find this Resource Guide helpful and welcome any comments or feedback you may have for us. We would love to hear how you choose to integrate the material into your classroom or program. If you have developed handouts or found other resources to enhance this guide, please email a copy of your resource to us.

Demetri Broxton
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Where is Here presents the work of contemporary artists of African descent who are interested in claiming, making, and describing places.

Place lies at the center of all discussions of historical and contemporary diasporas. It designates named geographies and influences how we experience them over time; here and there are tied to the past, present, and future. Place is a visual and embodied matter, evident in the everyday walk to work, homelessness, and refugee flight and resettlement.

The artists in Where is Here make places strange. Using recognizable forms and materials, they pull these elements out of their usual contexts and transform them. The artists reference locations that shaped their creative ambitions and representational strategies. Virtually brought together in this show, they live near and far; San Francisco and Oakland are represented, as are England, France, Trinidad, and the US Virgin Islands. These sites are hailed differently in the exhibition.

The subjects of Where is Here are the experiential, material, and conceptual routes that connect people to locales, reflecting actual travel, migration and even imagined wanderings. Such movement grounds us.

Through engagement with objects, words, and musical performance, Where is Here spurs inquiry. When do you think about place? How do you define home? Does history figure into this definition? Who features in that history? As you move through this show, are there ideas about the environment, domestic sphere, and history that relate to your everyday life? Can art shift your sense of self in a place?

The exhibition title operates as a declaration and interrogation, as do the artists’ curious, whimsical, and haunting interpretations of place. Their open-ended works are starting points for the visitor’s own journey. Prompted by the notion “where is here,” all of us can shape that space for ourselves.

Jackie Francis, PhD & Kathy Zarur, PhD
Curators, Where is Here
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>DIASPORA</td>
<td>The migration of people and their culture away from their homeland.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONCEPTUAL ART</td>
<td>Art in which the idea presented by the artist is more important than the finished product.</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPROPRIATION</td>
<td>The action of taking something for one’s own use, sometimes without the owner’s permission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SYMBOLISM</td>
<td>The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>COLONIALISM</td>
<td>The policy or practice of taking political control over another country, occupying it, and exploiting it economically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>Art that does not attempt to represent things as they are seen in nature, but instead uses shapes, forms, color, and textures to represent feelings or ideas.</td>
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1. **Look at Christopher Cozier’s piece, Little Gestures.**
   
a. Describe how the work is made:

b. **Describe the image you see on the benches.**
   How do you think this adds to the meaning of the artwork?

c. Why do you think the artist might have chosen to line the benches up on the floor?

d. **Look closely at the bench images.**
   What differences do you see? How might the differences change the meaning of the work?
2. **Sit in front of the two video pieces by Allan deSouza, *Actions for the Motion of Light in Water.* Allan deSouza is a California-based performance and conceptual artist of South Asian descent. He was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya.

   a. What happens to your visual perception (how your eyes see the work) when you stare at the videos for a long time?

   b. Does not knowing the location (country, city, or region) where the film was shot change the meaning of the piece for you? Why or why not?

3. **Visit LaVaughn Belle’s piece, *We Live in the Fragments.*

   a. Describe what you see.

   b. Read the label on the wall to the left of the piece. Why do you think Belle is so interested in the blue china called chaney in her home island of St. Croix?
4. Visit the two pieces by David Huffman, *Madagascar Fire* and *Berkeley*. David Huffman is a Bay Area-based artist who was born in Berkeley. The two pieces on display are both abstract and conceptual paintings made from the string and chain netting from basketball hoops. Huffman uses the basketball netting as both a brush—to apply paint to his canvas, and as a stencil—to block out paint from getting on the canvas.

a. What do you think the two pieces are about? What clues do you see that make you say this?

b. To the left of LaVaughn Belle’s piece, *Cuts and Burns*, there is a set of headphones playing a song called Sountrackers by San Francisco musical group, Broun Fellinis. Place the headphones on and listen to the track. While you’re listening, look at the two David Huffman paintings. Does anything about the paintings change for you while you are listening to the musical track? If so, explain.
5. Visit the Virtual Reality (VR) experiences created by artist, Olalekan Jeyifous entitled SMS: Vista 01, 02, and 03. Jeyifous is a Nigerian-born, Brooklyn-based artist and designer. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Architecture from Cornell University and his artworks are inspired by architecture. Much of his architecture is inspired by the shanty towns in the impoverished areas of Lagos, the biggest city in Nigeria, West Africa.

a. Describe what you see in the three Virtual Reality worlds (two in goggles and one on the screen)? How are they different?

b. Where are you standing? Would you be comfortable if you were standing in that spot in real life? Why do you think the artist placed you in that location?

c. Olalekan’s work is about what he thinks the future could look like in a mega-city like Lagos, Nigeria. Lagos has a population of an estimated 21 million people. By comparison, San Francisco only has about 840,000 people. Do you think the world Olalekan created could really exist in the future? Why or why not?
1. What was your favorite artwork in Where is Here? Describe what you liked about the piece.

2. For the artworks included in Where is Here, how do you think each artist’s ideas about their homeland influences the art they make? Explain your ideas.

3. If you were asked to create a piece of artwork that describes an issue in your community, city, state, or country, what issue would you describe and what would your artwork look like? Describe it or draw it in the space below.
Asya Abdrahman is a mixed media and installation artist who was born in East Africa. She lives and works in San Francisco. *In Her Footsteps* (2015) is a project in which Abdrahman asks friends and family for their used, discarded shoes. She then decorates the shoes with living moss, shells, stones, copper and gold wire, and other natural materials. Under the thick cover of the natural materials, each shoe carries the life journeys of the people who once wore them – including their challenges and triumphs. By covering the shoes in natural materials, Abdrahman literally gives life back to the shoes. She also references the person’s connection with the planet Earth.

Allan deSouza is a Kenya-born, British raised photographer and multimedia artist. He works in Berkeley, California. For his piece, *Actions for the Motions of Light in Water* (2015-16), deSouza created an installation of two different videos, both of moving bodies of water playing at the same time. The title of the piece is from Samuel R. Delany’s memoir entitled *The Motion of Light in Water* (1988). In Delany’s autobiographical piece about his coming of age and into his own identity in New York City, he sometimes mixes up fact with fiction. The book is fascinating, but not necessarily true to his real story. Allan deSouza is inspired by Delany and in his videos, he edits out the sounds and leaves out any details that would allow us to know where he shot his footage. The work is not just about the water, but more about our experience of the imagery’s rhythmic moving, the associations we make with it, and the memories that come up for us while looking at the film.

Adia Millett is an artist whose practices include photography, sculpture, drawing, collage, video, and installation. She was born in Los Angeles and lives and works in Oakland, CA. His piece, *The Fire Next Time* (2016) is inspired by the James Baldwin novel by the same name. Millett has selected a quote from Baldwin’s book to be presented along with her artwork which begins on the first floor of the museum. Crows move from the first floor, up the stairs, and make a connection to the large piece in the MoAD third floor gallery. In the excerpt, Baldwin deems social division and cultural differentiation as futile efforts to stave off “the fact of death”, the only fact we have.” Millett represents death through the buildings that to her represent the identities that we construct and maintain. Fire destroys these buildings and their destruction represents the impermanence of our human beliefs.

Broun Fellinis is a free jazz trio formed in San Francisco in 1991. The group consists of David Boyce (saxophone, vocals, keyboard), Kevin Carnes (drums, sampler), and Kirk Peterson (electric bass). The trio produces what they call “Brounsoun,” an eclectic mix of jazz, funk, hardcore rock, hip-hop, and dub rhythms. Their mostly instrumental tracks are peppered with Afrocentric shout outs, hailing the majesty of ancient African civilizations and black Americans’ triumphs in the face of struggle. In name and in spirit, these American musicians also claim kinship with the late Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini, a stylist of fantastic and exaggerated imagery. The exhibition contains two songs by Broun Fellinis on blue headphones: *Sountrackers*, 1997 and *859 Scott*, 1997.
Christopher Cozier is an artist, writer, and curator living and working in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. His work featured at MoAD is based on benches. In his project, *Little Gestures*, 2011, a small drawing of a humble bench is overlaid by a colonial map, a representational feature that positions the bench as something made across the world and across time. Hand-stamped onto cardboard arranged on the floor the design is also printed on pieces of stiff paper, which visitors are invited to take and assemble into three-dimensional benches. The giveaway is a little gesture, underscoring the social encounter between artist and audience.

David Huffman is a painter who was born in Berkeley, CA. He lives and works in Oakland, CA. For the two paintings at MoAD, Huffman uses the string netting of basketball hoops as brush and stencil. The results are mesmerizing rhythms of light, color, and line that move in and out of the pictures’ illusory depths. The warm hues (reds, oranges, and yellows) of the large piece, Madagascar Fire, connote the elements of fire and earth, while the cooler colors of Berkeley (blues and greens) connote sky and water. The titles of the two pieces denote locations that are both near and far from MoAD: Huffman’s college-town birthplace and the large island nation of Madagascar (which Huffman has never visited). Diversity is an important issue for both locations – gentrification and the loss of cultural diversity in Northern California, and the fragile biodiversity of Madagascar that is under threat by slash and burn agricultural practices.

Ingrid Pollard is a photographer, media artist and researcher born in Georgetown, Guyana. She lives and works in London. Pollard has participated in many artist residencies – opportunities where artists are invited for a time and space away from their usual environment to research, present, and create artwork. During her residencies in the countryside of England, France, and other locations around the world, she created the three photographs on view at MoAD. She also keeps a journal of her experiences in her residencies, which are included in the poem-like piece printed on the gallery wall, entitled *There Was Much Interruption*.

LaVaughn Belle is a painter, who also makes video, performance, installation, and art in public places. She was born in Trinidad & Tobago, and lives and works in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. In her pieces entitled Chaney, Belle brings a local material into her practice: pieces of discarded Danish dishware called “chaney.” Chaney is a colloquialism formed from a combination of the words change, china, and money. Chaney is regularly found by Crucian building contractors, gardeners turning over soil, and children digging in backyards and fields. Belle references these sites in her floor installation as well as the two paintings on the wall, in which she actually uses pieces of chaney found on St. Croix. She also translates the designs into paintings.
Olalekan Jeyifous is a Nigerian-born artist and designer based in Brooklyn. His training as an architect and a designer are evident in his artwork. The small models of buildings reference historical styles such as Islamic art’s geometric patterns, the rose windows of Gothic churches, and stilt houses built at shorelines and over waterways. His black and white images are actually collage work. He meticulously cuts out black paper and pastes the pieces onto a white background. The structures he makes are humorous, playful, and critical takes on consumption in contemporary life in the U.S. and elsewhere. Lastly, his virtual reality videos are both inviting and scary at the same time. The virtual city he creates reflect actual lived environments in the contemporary world, with structures that look like shanty towns in the developing world. Unlike in the U.S. these shanty towns are often located right next to wealthy areas in other parts of the world.

Thierry Fontaine is a photographer born on Réunion Island, a French controlled island in the Indian Ocean, just east of Madagascar. Fontaine’s photographs are still-lives: representations of objects from nature arranged to generate questions about the world around us and the cycles of life. In the three photographs on display at MoAD, he transforms harvested strawberries and a catch of fish into artistic objects. The images come from his series of photographs, entitled *Les Joueurs*, which translates to English as *The Gamblers*. In the series, the artist questions the dream generated by gambling. The hope, the waiting, the win and the loss associated with gambling are what he explores. By painting fish gold & photographing his creation, he is like an alchemist, turning a common, low value object into gold. In another photo of the same fish, Fontaine paints the fish black. For Fontaine, the color black can invoke oil spills or loss. While his work is intended to evoke dreams, by using natural materials, he also forces us to consider the environment spoiled by pesticides and industrial accidents on both land and sea.
Artist David Huffman uses his artwork to explore issues of identity, cultural trauma and social relationships. He works in the artistic mediums of painting, sculpture, and performance. Huffman is most known for his TRAUMAnauts series, in which Black people in astronaut suits populate his paintings and make powerful allusions to African American life. For the artist, the traumanauts represent the cultural homelessness that was forced upon African people brought to the Americas through the Transatlantic Slave Trade. These traumanauts are often placed in situations where they are trying to negotiate the trauma of African American history, while facing an uncertain future. In one of his most popular pieces, MLK, 2007 (pictured above), the traumanauts are both awestruck and strange in their surroundings, as they carry the coffin of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through a ravine. Above them stands a figure that looks like Moses parting the Red Sea. In his very last speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said,

“I just want to do God’s will. And he’s allowed me to go to the mountain. And I’ve looked over, and I’ve seen the promised land! I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get the promised land.”

Huffman’s painting makes us ask the question of whether Black people in America have finally reached the promised land, or if they will continue to be strangers in a strange land.

More recently, Huffman has made a significant aesthetic and conceptual shift in his work. He has moved away from the TRAUMAnauts, while continuing to investigate the politics of race through a subtler set of iconography. Around 2010, Huffman began focusing on the basketball as a symbol for Black life and culture in the United States. His latest pieces on view at Museum of the African Diaspora are abstractions made by the artist using both cloth and chain basketball netting as both a paint brush and as a stencil. Find out more about David Huffman at [http://ww2.kqed.org/artschool/2015/09/04/shooting-hoops-with-an-astronaut-david-huffman/](http://ww2.kqed.org/artschool/2015/09/04/shooting-hoops-with-an-astronaut-david-huffman/)
1. How might basketball represent the struggles and victories of Black social uplift in America?

2. Choose a powerful symbol that could represent an entire group of people? What symbol have you chosen? How does it represent a group of people? Explain.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

a. Create a piece of artwork that uses your chosen symbol to make a social commentary.

b. Huffman spent decades developing his artistic symbols. He began his artistic career making the TRAUMAnauts. He simplified his symbolism by focusing on abstract basketballs in paintings and in sculptures. Most recently, he has taken his abstractions further by just using the netting from basketball hoops to represent basketball. In abstract paintings, the artist is not trying to represent things as they appear in nature. Instead, the shapes, forms, and textures of the painting are used to represent an idea.

As an extension activity, see how far you can abstract your chosen symbol while still creating a piece of artwork that makes a social statement. Begin with your realistic piece of art that looks as close to something you would see in real life as possible. Then, create another piece that focuses less on details and more on the basic shapes and colors. For the abstraction, feel free to exaggerate shapes and features. If you want to go further, you can create a third piece that uses only color to convey the feeling you want to get across to people who view your work.

Artist Asya Abdrahman explores issues of healing and recovery from trauma, illness, and displacement. She works in paintings, installations, writing, and performance. Her work serves as a verbal and visual metaphor for rehabilitation and recovery. In her three pieces shown at MoAD, Abdrahman takes used shoes from friends and family members. The shoes have been walked in and are often falling apart, worn down, and at the point of needing to be thrown away. For Abdrahman, well-worn shoes carry the traces and memories of the journeys taken by the person who wore them. We all have journeys in life – triumphs and tribulations – with some having tougher journeys than others. By decorating the shoes with natural materials, Abdrahman gives the shoes new life by burying the worn out shoes with nature. The pieces also take on a secondary meaning when one considers ideas related to a “carbon footprint” – the total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in terms of how many tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) is produced by such activities. In the contemporary world, almost all of our activities have a negative impact on the earth. Because cheese comes from cows which produce a huge amount of greenhouse gases, one slice of cheese generates the same amount of CO2 as driving a car for 3.5 miles. Studies also show that a cellphone used for an hour per day could produce as much as 2,755 lbs of CO2 per year. As a result, Abdrahman’s work is also an invitation for us to consider our role in taking care of Mother Earth.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:
Select an everyday object that represents an important idea or which represents your identity in some way. Transform the object into your own artwork by either adding materials to it or recreate the object from nontraditional materials. For example, you might want to recreate a shoe but make it out of aluminum foil. Before you start, you should make a sketch of your plan to transform the object. As an artist, you will have many important choices to make, such as: what object you will choose, what materials you will use, the size of the artwork, colors you will use, and the title of the artwork.
Christopher Cozier is an artist, writer, and curator. The installation on display at MoAD, entitled Little Gestures is made of squares of cardboard that are standing up with the use of binder clips. The cardboard pieces have images made with rubber stamps that Cozier had made at an office supply store. The rubber stamps contain the image of a small bench, called a peera, which is commonly found throughout Cozier’s homeland of Trinidad. The benches are covered with the drawing of a colonial map. Though the bench is commonly found in Trinidad, the design is actually found all over the world and most likely originated in India, where a similar low bench is used in wedding ceremonies.

During the period of British colonialism in Trinidad, a large number of immigrants from India and China migrated to Trinidad beginning in 1845 for jobs as either indentured laborers, manual laborers, and educated servicemen. As a result, the culture of Trinidad is a combination Indigenous Amerindian, African, European, Indian, Chinese, Arab, and Jewish cultures.

Much like artist David Huffman, Christopher Cozier takes an everyday object and turns it into his own visual language. Cozier has appropriated the image of the bench to get us to rethink what we think we know about a simple bench. The peera bench is a simple bench that people use to perform simple tasks on a daily basis, such as picking weeds in a garden, shining shoes, or to sell items on the side of the road. Most people wouldn’t take the time to consider the history of a little, everyday bench, but Cozier sees the image of the bench as a tool to explore the global economic reality, the history of colonialism, migration and movement. Cozier’s parents were civil servants working for the government of Trinidad. He uses office materials and their repetitive procedures, such as stamping to represent politics and migration.

Coming from a small Caribbean Island, there are certain places where Cozier can easily travel. However, there are other places where it is very difficult to travel to without going through the lengthy process of obtaining visas – essentially stamps in a passport. In this respect, the benches in Cozier’s installation are like immigrants
trying to cross a border and they make us consider who is allowed to move and who must stay put. The colonial map asks us to consider the artificial borders created by colonialism that served the dual purposes of restricting movement while also creating new cultural forms, such as the peera bench.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:
Find an everyday object that interests you. Perform a Google search to find out the history of the object that you chose. If you get stuck finding ideas, perform a Google search for “history of everyday objects”. For example, the metal keys we use to lock and unlock doors originated in ancient Rome where they were made of bronze and were more of a status symbol for wealthy people to lock up valuables in their homes. Roman keys featured a hole so the key could be worn and seen – signaling that the wearer was wealthy and important enough to have valuable items worth locking up.

When you find out the history of your everyday item make a piece of artwork. Using Christopher Cozier’s combination of the peera and colonial map as inspiration, incorporate your chosen object with another visual symbol to help you to tell the history of your object. When you have completed your artwork, write about why you chose the object and what you learned from the art project.

LaVaughn Belle was born in a small village on the Caribbean island of Tobago. When she was only five months old, her family moved to another Caribbean island, St. Thomas. At seven years old, her family once again moved, but settled down on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Belle received a Master’s degree in studio arts from el ISA in Cuba in 2005 and has been showing her artwork throughout the Caribbean, the USA, and Europe. Her artwork began as figurative paintings, but has evolved to include video, performance, installation, and public intervention projects. Her current work is centered around the creation of narratives that challenge post-colonial hierarchies. Often times, the material she uses to make her art comes directly from the colonial period of St. Croix.

One of LaVaughn Belle’s pieces on view at MoAD, *We Live in the Fragments*, 2016, features two paintings that fuse together patterns and motifs from pottery fragments that are found all over the ground and washed up on beaches in St. Croix. Below the paintings is a pile of dirt containing fragments of the blue and white china dishes, called chaney on St. Croix. The shards are literal remnants of St. Croix’s colonial past and have a direct connection to the island’s history of slavery.

St. Croix was originally colonized by Denmark. The Dutch used enslaved Africans to work the island’s sugar cane plantations all across the island. During the 18th and 19th centuries, sugar was extremely profitable, which created a population of very wealthy Dutch settlers in St. Croix—wealth that was afforded them by the extremely brutal system of slavery. The wealthy settlers built great houses and filled them with lavish furnishings, décor, and imported fine china. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and wasteful practices shattered and spread the china across the plantation grounds. When china would chip, crack, or break, the Dutch settlers would simply throw the china outside.

Another theory on how the chaney was spread across the islands has a history connected to slavery. On July 2, 1848, a slave rebellion broke out in the Crucian city of Frederiksted – this was the second large-scale slave revolt in the Caribbean, following the famous revolt
in Haiti led by Toussaint L’Ouverture. The enslaved people protested, threatening to burn the town to the ground. The very next day, out of fear the Governor-General, Peter von Scholten pronounced all the enslaved people in St. Croix free. This freedom was short-lived, as all of the free laborers were forced, by law, to sign contracts which turned all of them into indentured servants and bound them and their families to their former masters’ plantations.

Thirty years later, in October 1878, laborers gathered in Frederiksted to demand higher wages and better working conditions. The protest turned violent after police began arresting and abusing laborers. The rioters looted the town and torched everything except for Fort Frederiksværn. The riot, where 879 acres of land were torched, is infamously known as Fireburn – the title of Belle’s other piece on display at MoAD. It is thought that many fragments of chainey found on St. Croix were the result of the looting and burning that occurred during Fireburn.

1. How does the story of Fireburn add to the meaning of Belle’s two pieces?

2. What do you think LaVaughn Belle is trying to say or get us to think about through her artwork? Explain your ideas.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

a. Pick an issue that is really important to you. Examples could be gentrification, global warming, racism, sexism, or anything else that you think is an important topic of discussion. Using your issue as inspiration create a collage – a piece of art made by sticking various materials such as photographs, pieces of paper, fabric, or other materials onto a backing such as paper, cloth, or board. Images can be collected from newspapers, magazines, used books, posters, photocopies, written assignments, or found materials – from a place like SCRAP in San Francisco, or the Depot for Creative Reuse in Oakland.

b. After making the collage, take the project further by:
   i. Writing a story about the collage
   ii. Making a drawing or painting from the collage
   iii. Writing a poem to explain the collage
   iv. Making a book from a collection of collages that tell a story
State Standards Addressed in This Guide

The learning goals in this resource guide may be adapted to meet the standards in almost any subject or grade level. Due to the themes of the exhibition connected to identity and the complexity of some of the content, much of the content is most easily adaptable to middle school and high school classrooms. However, the content can meet the content standards requirements for many of the elementary grade levels.

VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

To see which Visual Arts Standards are met in each activity, please visit the California Visual and Performing Arts Standards at http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/vpastandards.pdf

HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS