Field trip to the MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON
Wednesday February 23, 2005

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
TABLE OF CONTENTS, CHRONOLOGY/TIMELINE

This page is intended to help you stay on time and on track during the fieldtrip. All transitions between UPSTAIRS (Second Floor) and DOWNSTAIRS (First Floor) are marked. Asterisks (*) indicate need to traverse relatively long distances between indicated objects.

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**Background/Preparation**

**This is an academic exercise. Please approach it accordingly. Follow the instructions conscientiously!**

Please read carefully through this GUIDE and WORKBOOK before embarking on the fieldtrip. Spend some time in preparation, both alone and together with groupmates and classmates. Study the accompanying MUSEUM FLOOR PLANS. Reflect on and discuss expectations. In fact, you are going to be doing some first-hand research. Prepare yourselves, insofar as you can, as you would if you and your classmates were members of an actual research team. (Which, in effect, you are!). For we are about to embark on an actual field trip in the form of an expedition to the MFA “in search of quality”. Adopt the mindset and activate the skills that you know to be the basic research equipment of all serious scientifically-oriented observers. Get something to write/draw with and something to write/draw on. Start taking notes and making sketches! We will want to be able to share and compare and contrast highlights (lowpoints) of our fieldtrip experiences. This can only be done in a scientifically credible way if we agree in advance to adopt and to conscientiously follow suitably scientific methods of procedure and documentation. Take notes and digital photos (no flash allowed in MFA), make sketches/drawings. It is necessary and desirable for everyone involved in this exercise to try to make the indicated observations in the same order and under reasonably comparable conditions of exposure. This means going through the exhibits in the (roughly chronological) order indicated by numerical sequence in the following pages.

Initially you are being asked to travel SOLO. Try to do so. Annotate your copy of the floorplan! Follow the ITINERARY. 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 in the time available. Try to arrive at PART TWO -- on your OWN -- having reached your own best and most trustworthy personal conclusions BASED ON THE TOUR. Take note of instances in which you find yourself distracted or feel that the quality of your experience is being affected (for better, for worse) by your awareness of your surroundings? (the city? the architecture? the lighting? the sounds? the presence of other members of the class and/or objects not among the handful selected for closer inspection? Do you feel unduly constrained or comfortably contained by the rigorous timeframe? How is the quality of your experience influenced by the fact that your are on an academic fieldtrip with classmates/groupmates?

Stay focused on the task of achieving the goal of the fieldtrip. You are on a SEARCH for QUALITY. You don’t need to completely avoid interacting with classmates/groupmates. You are not expected to forego all social contact with others, but PLEASE TRY TO DO -- AND HELP EACH OTHER TO DO -- THE WORK OF PART ONE ON YOUR OWN.

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 with you: THIS GUIDE, your JOURNAL, some writing/drawing materials, a digital camera (if available) 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.”

Some of your predecessors have said (and we agree) that it is a good idea to approach the field trip as if embarking on an actual scientific expedition. For example, make sure to take careful notes from beginning to end! Are you and your teammates (group mates) ready, willing and able to make the MFA field trip a serious individual and collective “search for quality.”

What is the MFA? What do you expect 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 them in mind as the exercise proceeds.

As Pirsig argues, if you want a “quality” outcome, it matters greatly whether or not you really "care about what you are doing". 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. The field trip will be taking place just shortly after dinnertime. In terms of biorhythms, and associated "energy and arousal levels" this normally is a time of relative mental relaxation and lowered attentiveness for most people. But be forewarned: to get the most out of this experience, you will need to be in a mentally and behaviorally alert, engaged and energetic frame of mind.

Be on the alert. Expect the unexpected. Try to pay close attention to what is going on in your surroundings. As you board the bus ... en route and upon arrival, think about where you are heading and with whom and for what purpose. Be on the lookout for “distractions” – note the play of social influences upon your perceptions in both routine and problematical aspects of what you are experiencing. What are you experiencing? And why? THINK about your own feelings and actions.
INTRODUCTION

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".
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 primogeneratrix Earth Goddess (Gaea) 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") opened its doors to its first class. (There were 15 students. Where was the school located?) The MFA moved to its present site in the Back Bay Fens in 1909. From then until 1981, when the WEST WING was opened, the main entrance was the one (long closed but now happily reopened) on the SOUTH SIDE of the museum in the center of the MAIN BUILDING on Huntington Avenue. Later on, when the EVANS WING (on the Fenway side) was added, the museum could also be entered from the NORTH.

The MFA http://www.mfa.org/home.htm 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 (For more details, see, e.g. MFA, Illustrated Handbook).

Like MIT, the MFA advertises itself as an educational institution. (See Mission Statement http://www.mfa.org/mission_statement.htm) 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 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 consider the significance of the conjunction of the following facts:
You will be visiting the MFA
1. as an MIT student at a particular stage in the process of pursuing a particular degree,
2. and who has just finished reading roughly the first half of ZAAMM
3. in the context of the beginning of an undergraduate HASS elective class centrally concerned with the study of affect in neurobiological, psychological and sociocultural perspective.

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

2 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.
Have you been thinking about what you are hoping and expecting to learn by participating in this “search for quality?” Write down your answer. Does it tell you anything meaningful about your own values?

In approaching these questions, please bear in mind what has previously been said in class about the existence of some general principles underlying the organization (parts; internal/external relations) and development (evolution/history/epigenesis/ontogeny) of human systems across a wide range of instances (e.g. machines, organisms, artworks, etc.). The point is that the same generic cognitive, affective and expressive aspects of human systems that relate to the organization and development of our personal mental lives and behavior are also manifested in counterpart forms at the social and cultural level. Accordingly, we should be able to discern their counterparts in our encounters with works of art (among other things) and in the organization and development of human social institutions like museums, schools, colleges, universities, and corporations.

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? What is "Fine" in the case of the fine arts? Who knows? Who is to say? What (whose) are the values involved? How are decisions currently being made concerning what is (and what is not) to be sought after, acquired, and exhibited? What is the MFA for? What does it do? Whose values does it represent? What can an exploration of its form and content and **modus operandi** teach you about the worldviews and value systems implicit in prevailing concepts of "fine arts"?

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.

Today, most **cognoscenti** would probably agree that it is a world-class museum of art. Although not nearly as big and well-endowed and highly regarded as, say, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, or the Louvre in Paris, it undeniably 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.).

And, by the way:

**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 ...
Emotional/Intellectual

By an argument that we have already begun to consider elsewhere, human mental life exhibits two distinct yet deeply interrelated aspects: cognitive and affective. Not surprisingly, art historians long have recognized the existence of two corresponding modes of artistic expression. Thus, in the extreme, the romantic or affectively charged approach is both expressive and impressionistic in the sense that it aims to evoke intense 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 to the subject. By contrast, (and, again, at its most extreme), a classical or intellectual approach is cool, detached, realistic, and analytical. It places great value on formal elements of design, composition, symmetry, etc. lends itself much more readily to a cool, literal or rational interpretation, and conforms more closely to conventional rules, with priority given to neat clean arrangements and proper proportions. It values both narrative and compositional considerations most highly and is not primarily intended to 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.

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 following scheme is drawn from a current art history text. Although oversimplified, it usefully suggests that 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.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
DEPARTURE

Our chartered bus will leave MIT from Ames Street in front of the Wiesner Building (E15) at precisely 7:05 p.m. WE WILL NOT WAIT BEYOND THAT TIME! DON'T BE LATE!

If you miss the bus, or are unable to make the trip with your group at the appointed time, you will be missing out on an important part of your 9.68/05 learning experience. At very least, you must make it your business to visit the museum on your own (or better yet with at least a few classmates) before the next class meeting. Be sure to follow the itinerary described. See the accompanying flyer/floor plan for information regarding MFA hours and access.

The field trip consists of an ARRIVAL AND INTRODUCTION portion, followed by TWO MAIN PHASES. The FIRST PHASE is a kind of "solo whirlwind tour" intended, in part, to provide a general overview. By the time it has been completed, you will have traversed a wide range of periods and cultures and genres and galleries. In the process, this guide will draw your attention to a mere 34 specific objects selected from the "on display" fraction of the museum's collection of more than 2 million objects! Below: Rafael, School of Athens, Detail. The walking and talking men in center are intended to be Plato (left) and Aristotle.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
OVERVIEW OF PHASES ONE AND TWO

There are **TWO** closely timed and systematically interrelated stages or **PHASES** of the field trip. Each phase has a different goal and involves somewhat different methods of procedure. During the first phase, -- which is divided into several main parts -- you are intended to "travel solo," 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 **twenty-eight** specific objects and/or areas representing various eras, traditions, genres and subjects relevant to our "inquiry into values".

Try to visit the indicated sites (sights) in the indicated sequence. If you do, **PHASE ONE** should take around 75 minutes (from 7:30 to 8:45 p.m.) and **PHASE TWO** will take about 65 minutes (from 8:45 p.m. to 9:50 p.m.) We should thus complete the entire field-trip exercise in the 150 minutes (or so) that we have available (between 7:20 and 9:50 P.M).

You will have a lot of territory to cover in **PHASE ONE**.

As a rough guide to the scale of the space you will be traversing in **PHASE ONE**, consider this: on a recent Sunday morning, with the place quite crowded with visitors, it took my wife and me around 20 minutes to traverse the indicated **PHASE ONE** distance. Our pace was quite vigorous, and we didn’t pause to make any detailed inspections of any of the indicated areas and objects. Let me 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 objectives. Spend, on average, at least one or two thoughtful moments with each of the 33 areas/objects that you are being asked to examine in 65 minutes in **PHASE ONE**.

**WALK. DO NOT RUN.**

As you move into and through the MFA, please don’t forget that it is a public place and our fieldtrip is an official MIT academic activity. Let’s all try to represent MIT responsibly, as visitors from 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.**

As already noted, the principal aim of **PHASE ONE** (from around 7:30 to 8:45 P.M.) is to provide you with an overview of the museum as a whole in a roughly chronological sequence, while concurrently considering works illustrative of the diversity of cultures and periods and genres represented in the MFA’s regular collections.

During this phase, the **modus operandi** is to be entirely individual. The impressions that you form during **PHASE ONE** are to be your own. Traveling "solo" you will also be better able to move from place to place more easily, and thus cover the ground that must be covered in the time available. This will mean moving at a relatively rapid rate. 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 me know in advance, and I will try to help you make some alternative arrangements.)

Since the prescribed path will take you though a substantial fraction of the museum’s galleries and exhibit areas, you may expect to be tempted to focus your attention on various objects along the way. Feel free to do so. But only briefly. In any case, try to resist becoming sidetracked. Don’t get into off-topic conversations with groupmates/classmates. Form your own impressions, insofar as possible. The whole point of **PHASE ONE** is for everyone to have his/her own INDEPENDENT opportunity to view and to reflect upon the SAME SET of assigned objects (or groups of objects) in the same sequence. Please defer until later any desire that you may feel to exchange thoughts and feelings about the field trip experience with fellow study group members or other classmates. There will be plenty of time for that during and following **PHASE TWO**.

Notice that the bottom of the floor plans -- as printed on **page 8** -- is south.

An abbreviated chronology/timetable for the trip is included on **page 1**

Be sure to complete each major section within the indicated time.
MFA First Floor Plan. RED NUMBERS indicate approximate location of objects identified in text.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

MFA Second Floor Plan. RED NUMBERS indicate approximate location of objects identified in text.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
ARRIVAL (7:20-7:30 PM)

Our estimated time of arrival at the MFA is 7:20 PM.

Feel free to leave bulky jackets and coats, heavy bookbags, and other weighty personal/professional belongings on the bus. They will be safe and we can thus avoid waiting in long lines at the MFA checkroom at closing time. If you have any stuff that you don’t feel safe leaving on the bus, you can check it (for free) at a checkroom inside the museum near the entrance.

We will be dropped off at the SOUTH (HUNTINGTON AVENUE) ENTRANCE.

1: (See first page) The massive bronze equestrian sculpture of a mounted Lakota chief with outstretched arms in front of the museum is Appeal to the Great Spirit—by Cyrus Edward Dallin (1861-1944). This was the fourth and final one in an epic series depicting the artist's view of the struggle for survival of the native North Americans. Does this Appeal have "the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance" does it properly belong to "the class of objects subject to aesthetic criteria; works of art collectively, as paintings, sculptures, or drawings? Does it exhibit "skilled workmanship, execution, or agency? does it "move" you? If not, why not? If so, how? What do you know (and how do you feel) about the worldview, valuesystem and lifestyle that the artist is endeavoring to depict? How is the expression and communication of the intended ideas (ideals?) achieved? You should be constantly asking yourselves and each other these sorts of questions about other works during and after the fieldtrip.

We enter the museum (on the FIRST FLOOR level).

Through the windows of the entry hall on your right (EAST) and left (WEST), parts of the museum’s African (Nubian) and Asian (Indian) collections are visible.

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 in a visible place. (Optional: keep wearing it daily 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 glasses, your JOURNAL and something to write with? There is a free CHECK ROOM along the corridor to the left of the great staircase. REST ROOMS are located on the level above in the Upper Rotunda -- your next stop.

Ascending the main stairway and look around

2: the Upper Rotunda. The artworks around the walls and on the ceiling are the work of John Singer Sargent. What is their theme? They were begun in 1917. A few words are in order about 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. On the middle left ceiling panel, Sargent depicts Apollo (the sun god) presiding over a contest between the two. On the left, the romantic and sensuous in the arts is represented by a naked Dionysus with Pan and the whole of living nature backing him up. On the right, a maiden representing the classical perspective gestures toward the heavens with the backing of a seated Athena who appears to be pushing her own warlike aspect into the background.
Photos removed due to copyright reasons.

J. S. Sargent  Psyche and Eros (left); Apollo and the Muses (below)
Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
PART ONE: ANCIENT ROOTS OF WESTERN TRADITIONS
Allow about 15 mins. (Roughly 7:30-7:45 p.m.)

Within the MFA, the itinerary generally follows a long and roughly chronological developmental sequence that might be said to begin in "the dark backward and abysm of time" (Shakespeare). Before the field trip you should read carefully through this GUIDE and the “Timescales” document.

We use the term "history" in reference to situations in which there is a more or less conscious and deliberate 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 "prehistory" and "history" is inevitably "fuzzy." For many of us who are scientifically, technologically, managerially inclined, there is a prevailing tendency to trust conclusions only insofar as they are arrived at via methods of procedure of the kinds that ostensibly characterize the so-called "hard" sciences. Our credulousness in this respect engenders, in turn, a sometimes quite un-self-critical intolerance for "softness" or "fuzziness" or "vagueness." To what we hold dear we feel strongly protective (defensive?). Values are akin to "affect" and thus linked to "feelings" subjectively informing opinions, shaping attitudes engendering biases – all of which are seen as having no proper place in the substantive content or inquiry process that defines the prototypical socially prescribed epistemological, axiological and methodological ideals of modern experimental science. In point of fact, such fuzziness is an inescapable fact of human mental life. A modicum of ambiguity (uncertainty, complementarity, relativity, etc.) inevitably attends all of our best-intended efforts to precisely define (e.g.) the boundaries of living systems. The point is worth pursuing a bit further.

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 the same features are to be found in human systems more generally.

A. BEGINNINGS – According to the Cosmic Calendar it is 12/31at 23:59:00 – that is: 26,500 yrs –883 human generations –a mere minute ago

No living memory links us with the origins of art. (Let alone the origins of the universe.) 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 (should have a figure) or the painters whose images covered the walls of caves, some 20,000 years ago, in what is now France.

3 This issue is discussed in the Timescales handout. See above.
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 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 Neandertals and, in the Middle East, with early anatomically modern humans. As opposed to the "one tool does all" approach to technology among Neandertals, says Klein, "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 for the earliest evidence of human knowledge regarding the nature and behavior of materials. What he found goes back to prehistoric times and is to be found in the form of early artifacts of the kind commonly sought after by art museums!

You will find some of the oldest pieces in the MFA in the narrower of the two Egyptian Galleries just to the east of the Upper Rotunda

A. PELEOLITHIC OBJECTS: •3: look at the map on the wall on your right as you enter the gallery and examine the objects in the cases on your left. What kinds of objects are these? If made for use what are they for? What materials are they made from? How were they made? 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 have begun with the Neolithic or "new stone" age and the 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) As the interdependence and trade between rural farmers and urban dwellers increased, the earliest cities -- the first agriculture-based urban societies -- began to emerge. And with them came the art of writing -- thus signaling (in our traditionaally 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 included ancient Iraq, of course.)

As far as is known, this aspect of our development began 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-Euphrates valleys, in present-day Iraq.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
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.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Compare foregoing with contemporary geopolitical map of the same area

B. AFRICAN GENESIS

As already intimated, the available archaeological and paleontological evidence indicates that the human species had its beginnings in Africa. The MFA collection includes little from primordial African traditions, but, notably, everything in the MFA's massive Egyptian collection which we will begin visiting next, is AFRICAN ART! The museum's collection of southern African objects appears relatively small and not terrifically ancient, in comparison yet, the MFA has one of the most comprehensive collections of southern African art outside of Africa.

Return to the First floor and turn left.

What is –Nubia-? Examine the map on your left as you enter the gallery According to my Encyclopedia Britannica (ed. 11) –Nubia is a term about the precise meaning of which no two writers are in accord. - The word itself appears to have been unknown to the ancient Greeks, by whom all of Africa south of Egypt was vaguely referred to as Ethiopia (=the land of the dark races-). As a geographical designation, Nubia is comparably problematical. To a large extent, it includes most or all of what is now called the Sudan, but its uncertain boundaries correspond to those of no existing nation states. Rather, it is hard to define region of north-east Africa, bounded N. by Egypt, E. and W. by the Red Sea and the Libyan Desert respectively, and extending S. indefinitely to about the latitude of Khartoum. –Within the limits indicated, the land today consists mainly of sandy desert and rugged and arid steppes and plateaus through which the Nile forces itself into Upper Egypt. In this section, beginning below Khartoum and terminating at Aswan (now a high dam site) the river makes a great S-shaped bend, and there occurs a continuous series of slight falls and rapids, including all the historical –six cataracts- (numbered from north to south) Finally, as an ethnic category, –Nubian- is likewise of dubious value. Nevertheless, as a way of referring to an ancient black African cultural tradition with deep roots in a particular northeast African region and a strong sense of artistic identity, it is a useful label.
Find and examine

• 4: Nubian artifacts

Exit the Nubian gallery through the east door. This brings you into a gallery devoted to art of the Ancient Near East. Examine • 5: the map on the floor and note some of the objects from ancient Iraq and Iran. Some of these items date back to the height of the first great Sumerian civilizations, 5,300 years or 177 generations ago.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
B. ANCIENT IMAGES OF LIFE IN DEATH: •6: the MUMMIES!

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. How does what we know about Ancient Egyptian attitudes toward their royal dead relate to our notions of what they thought about the relative importance of the contents of the cranial and thoracic/abdominal cavities?

Much of what little we know regarding ancient Egyptian notions about “mind” and its relation to the body (and its parts) comes from accounts of the cavalier manner in which Egyptian embalmers treated the brains of the corpses they were preparing for mummification.

Retrace your steps back through the Nubian gallery and cross the main hall to enter the Asian Wing.

PART TWO: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA.

Allow about 15 mins. (Roughly 7:45-8:00 p.m.)

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. Due to limitations of time, and in keeping with the title of the book we are reading, we will here concentrate mainly on a few examples of Buddhist art.

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.
A. INDIA: Although Buddhism began in India, and the Indian Gallery is a good place to see some early Buddhist art, we here focus initially on

\textbullet 7: \textit{an 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. This object is temporarily on loan to another museum, but a closely related one is on the wall opposite its usual place.

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?}

\begin{center}
\textit{Photo removed due to copyright reasons.}
\end{center}

Archaeological and literary evidence indicates that Buddhism was carried from India to China during the latter years of the Han Dynasty (206 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.
B. KOREA:

Medical Buddha. (Next page) This object is not on display, but the image and description deserve consideration. 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.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
C. JAPAN: Proceed through the gallery containing the Japanese swords and climb the stairs to the SECOND FLOOR. Proceed straight ahead (west) to

8. the **Japanese Buddhist Sculpture Gallery**. This -temple room- gallery was built at the beginning of this 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.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
D. **CHINA**: Next, head north through the **Chinese Galleries**, **pausing** to examine

• **9**: **Chinese Pottery** in the narrow gallery leading north from the Japanese gallery.

• **10**: Enter and explore the **Chinese Furniture Gallery**. Exit via the easternmost door. This brings you back to the **UPPER ROTUNDA**. Pause here for a moment. Notice that you’ve arrived at (or rather returned to) a boundary between what our (eurocentric, "western") culture calls the "Far" and "Middle" or "Near" East (including Northeastern Africa). For the rest of **PHASE ONE**, you will be remaining pretty much within what we customarily think of as "the western tradition."

**PART THREE: THE -WESTERN TRADITION- FROM PREHISTORIC TO MEDIEVAL TIMES.**
Allow about 15 minutes (Roughly 8:00-8:15 p.m.)

A. **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 you should be able to recognize here some striking continuities with the Nubian material that you saw downstairs.

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 was a period characterized by an absolute concentration of authority and wealth in the hands of a royal household. 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, a complete breakdown of law and order occurred and the Sixth Dynasty was followed by a period of political chaos . . . Of the many remarkable objects in this **Egyptian Gallery**, there are two to which you should pay particular attention:

• **11**: The pair statue of KING MYCERINIUS -- third and last of the Pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty -- and his wife, QUEEN KHAMERERNEBTY II is one of the finest 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."

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
This object is more than 4000 years old! What can be learned about the values 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 cognitively and affectively connected 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 of quality in these ancient artifacts. (If not, why not? if so, how? and in what respects?). More to the point, as students of affect, can we read anything 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), 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 knowledge and religious faith; look out for any resonances/dissonances between what you see here (on the one hand) and your own artistic/ aesthetic sensibility; can you find any evidence here to support (or refute) the conclusion that 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 living and working in the Third Millennium, BC. 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. Enter the Greek Gallery in the southeasternmost corner of the museum.
B. CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC ANTIQUITY: THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND ROMANS:

As Pirsig tells us, we must look to the Ancient Greeks for the beginnings of the philosophical frame of reference within which (according to Pirsig's nameless narrator in ZAAMM) his ghostlike alter ego, Phaedrus set out to "pursue the ghost of rationality."

Pertinently, it is out of the cultural framework of Ancient Greece that our whole –western- mode of rational discourse has grown. As we saw last week in class, 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.

Reference has already been made to the existence of a richly symbolic and enduringly meaningful Greek CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY much older than anything that has come down to us in material form from the Ancient Greeks. 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 supernatural personages. In the Iliad, for example, the supposedly blind bard Homer (below), offers a poetically vivid and lively account of a transgenerationally inherited series of myths or legends. In Homeric lore, humans and supernatural personages 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 heavenly dominions. Ancient Greek philosophers and artists and natural scientists grounded much of their own approach to certain subjects and themes in this tradition.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
We begin our examination of these borrowings in the **Greek Gallery** on the second floor in the southeasternmost corner of the museum. Four objects in this room are of particular interest to us in this connection. The first is

• **13:** Three-Sided Relief.
The second object is located around the middle of the gallery. It is a 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 said to have been executed by the Greek sculptor Pheidias 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: A bust supposedly of a particularly notable one -- the fabled Socrates (469 to 399 BC.) -- is located nearby. Socrates’ predecessors, contemporaries and followers included Herodotus, Alcmaeon of Croton, Hippocrates of Cos, Aristophanes, Plato, Archimedes, Euclid ...
•15: Socrates. This old battered head sits on a pedestal near the 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 by the Greek sculptor Lysippos. Socrates' students and disciples included two, Xenophon and Plato, who authored many texts in which their fabled teacher is described. In the better-known works of the latter, Socrates is constantly 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 the philosophy of the platonic Socrates on that of Pirsig, his narrator, and the latter's "wolf-like" alter ego. It is also worth noting in passing that the educational tradition that Plato started has continued, more or less uninterruptedly, to the immediate present. In this masculine tradition, Socrates represents a new kind of hero.

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The Death of Socrates, by Jacques Louis David, NY, The Metropolitan Museum of Art:
Do you know the story of his indictment, trial, conviction and execution?
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.

This is: **16**: the grand model of THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS. The 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 law of the excluded middle, which remains, to this day, the centerpiece of what has since become the modern scientific paradigm. In effect, it is to Aristotelian logic that Pirsig is referring when he has his narrator discuss “the knife.” Happily for us, there is now reason to believe in a more inclusive (relativistic, complementaristic, kind of scientific understanding.)

Pass next through the Roman Gallery, We are arriving at the threshold of the present (common or Christian era); Ptolemaic astronomy, Rise of the Roman Empire; lifetimes of Jesus, Ovid, Galen (others)

Indian arithmetricians are just about now inventing the concept of “zero” and learning to use decimals.Pause to examine

**17**: the posthumous portrait head of the emperor Augustus

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4 Much, much, later, in the 17th century, the French philosopher/mathematician, Rene Descartes would take both of these ideas, (categorical logic and 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 cognitive basis of the CLASSICAL/ROMANTIC SPLIT and is the main source of the worldview, valuesystem and lifestyle that we know as "modern."
1,500 years (50 generations) ago -- Rome Falls; Rise of Islam; Arab Culture flourishes; Moslem Conquests. (This is a good time to note a huge omission in this itinerary: Islamic art, which flourished from the 9th thorough the 15th centuries is entirely left out.) Below: Persian (Iranian) plate, 12th century.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

C. MEDIEVAL AND BAROQUE ARTS
Proceed north to the end of the Roman Corridor, and turn left. (To the right (east), is the former Medieval Gallery (now closed for construction).

(20 Generations) ago – 12/31 @ 11:59:59:00 –
1001-1500 -- 1,000 – 500 years (33-17) Generations) ago – Mayan Civilization Flourishes; Sung Dynasty in China; Byzantine Empire in Europe and Middle East; Mongol Invasion; anti-Muslim Christian Crusades Columbus Voyages.
PART FOUR: EUROPE FROM THE 16TH TO THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Allow about 15 minutes (Roughly 8:15-8:30 p.m.)

1501-1600 – 500-400 years (17-14 Generations) ago, So begins the last second of the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the last month of the Cosmic Year: The beginning of “Modern Times” advent of Copernican Astronomy

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

We continue to consider European art of the Renaissance. In order to get there, return to the UPPER ROTUNDA and turn RIGHT (NORTH).

A. EARLY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS: William I. Koch Gallery The work here reflects some of what has been happening in European painting during the period preceding the Renaissance.

See •18: Francesco del Cairo Italian (1598-1674) Herodias with the head of St. John the Baptist.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
Continue through the Koch gallery, exiting at the north end and bear right around the EVANS WING stairway, and then turn RIGHT (EAST) BEFORE you reach the main corridor. In these galleries are some important works of early Italian Art.

In the first of these, 19: you will find many paintings on religious themes, particularly images of the “Madonna and child” Two of these are not on display: THE MADONNA IN THE CLOUDS (about 1425-35), by the Italian master DONATELLO. (Below, left) and the undated, fifteenth-century, terra-cotta relief entitled VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH TWO ANGELS, (Below, right) attributed to the Italian master BARTOLOMEO BELLANO (1434-1496). These two are of particular interest to us, however, because of the striking differences in the Madonna’s facial expressions. Look at the expressions on the Madonna’s face in the images that are on display. What do you notice?
• 20: In the next gallery, on the far east wall, see the large Flemish tryptich (artist unknown) of The Martyrdom of Saint Hippolytus.

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 designation). 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, the European "discovery" of –previously unknown–lands led to historically unprecedented kinds and degrees of genocidal violence by men whose worldviews were "incurably romantic."

Proceed next to the extreme eastern end of the second floor and enter the 17c Dutch Masters gallery.

See: • 21: The Procuress (1622) by Dirck van Baburen, Dutch, 1590/95-1624

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
Proceed west through the two 18th century European galleries. In the second of these, see

•22:

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
Continuing westward, enter the first of two 19th century European galleries. See:

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

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
B. PRE-IMPRESSIONISM

Continuing WEST along the EVANS WING, enter the second 19th century gallery and see

24: L’Eminence GRISE (The Gray Eminence) by the French pre-impressionist, J.L. Gerome

This painting deserves careful examination. In the affectively charged momentary encounter between this bookworm in monks’ cloth and all those courtiers, some might see relations between “church” and “state,” some, in looking at it, profess to be able to see the interplay illustrated here as involving tensions between “meaning” and “power” in a human social system. What do you see? How do postures and gestures and facial expressions and groupings contribute to the generally affectively “charged” atmosphere? What (if anything) can you infer from your encounter with the picture regarding the worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles prevailing in the depicted social situation? What is happening here? Who are these people? The storylike imagery is classically romantic! Can you find anyone in this picture with whom you can more or less readily identify yourself? Choose a perspective from which to “read” the story that the artist is telling you. “What is the story?” How much of what you come up with is of your own invention? How much is “completely clear” in the artist’s depiction? How are we mentally able to “relate” to such imagery? What is quality in the relationship between objects and observers’ “eyes”. In the absence of a more apt way of putting it we force visual and spatial metaphors into service in an ultimately vain effort verbally to express some sense of what we have when we have an understanding of something (whatever the matter may be).

When you reach the large gallery at the East end of the EVANS WING, enter and find works by the

C. IMPRESSIONISTS AND POST-IMPRESSIONISTS.

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 collection. Most are paintings in oil on canvas and
include world-class works by Van Gogh, Monet, Degas, Cassat, Renior, Pisarro, and Cezanne. How do the works in this room affect you? See especially:

•25: PAUL GAUGIN (French; 1848-1903): D'OU VENONS NOUS? -- QUE SOMMES-NOUS? -- OU ALLONS NOUS?, 1897. - - a monumental and enigmatic painting in which the artist moodily addresses "life's key questions."

Notoriously, Gaugin painted it in Tahiti in one frantic month, regarded 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. Here is a consummately romantic work. 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.

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, values systems and lifestyles. Feel free to reflect on the meaning to you of these key questions (as you view the painting, and again, later on.
Currently not on display (on loan to another museum) is a longtime romantic favorite: PIERRE AUGUSTE RENIOR (1841-1919)  
*Dance at Bougaville*

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
PART FIVE: AMERICAN ART
Allow about 15 minutes (Roughly 8:30-8:45 p.m.)

Return to the center of the EVANS WING and descend the CENTRAL STAIRWAY. At the bottom, turn right. You have left Europe behind and are now moving into "the New World." Continue straight ahead to the COLONIAL PORTRAITS gallery.

A. THE COLONIAL AND FEDERAL PERIODS: In this GALLERY you will find many colonial portraits and some early American works by Thomas Singleton Copley (1738-1815) and his Contemporaries. Do you sense a very definitely patriotic "American atmosphere" in this room? If so, please try to characterize it further. What is it about the space -- beyond the artworks -- that creates the atmosphere in question? What are your initial feelings about being in this gallery space? Do you experience your feelings changing as you begin to realize that there are connections between your feelings and the color of your surroundings? How do colors come to exert their affective effects?

•26: See, especially, Copley’s Watson and the Shark (1778)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
B.Exiting the Colonial Arts Gallery, head westward. Enter the Mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century gallery opposite the first central stairway. Here on the west wall, you will find a perennial 9.68 favorite:

\textbullet \textbf{27:} THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN, by Thomas Cole.

Photos removed due to copyright reasons.

Note that the genre of painting to which this work belongs is technically referred to as "Classical Romanticism". This involves the utilization of a "romantic" style to depict a "classical" subject matter. Here a highly symbolic biblical incident of great scriptural significance is depicted in a prototypically romantic -- visually exciting -- way. Is there anything about this finely detailed, dark/bright, high-contrast, almost photographically exaggerated, naturalistic and spiritualistic classical/romantic work that really "grabs" you?
C. **PRE-IMPRESSIONISM:** Continue heading west past the second EVANS WING STAIRWAY and enter the first gallery on your RIGHT: here you will find works representative of the “aesthetic movement” that preceded impressionism. See: •28: (below left) John White Alexander, American, 1856-1915 Isabella and the Pot of Basil.

Photos removed due to copyright reasons.

D. **IMPRESSIONISM:** The next gallery to the west is largely devoted to the work of John Singer Sargent. See his large painting of •29 (above right) The Daughters of Edward D. Boit. Notice the depicted vases on display in the corners.

It will not have escaped your notice that the path you have been following westward, through the FIRST FLOOR of the EVANS WING, has taken you roughly through the history of American art from revolutionary times and the founding of the new republic until around the end of the last century.

Retrace your steps eastward along the central corridor of the FIRST FLOOR of the EVANS WING. Just before the central stairway, turn right; follow the curved corridor to its midway point, and turn right. At the opposite end of the gallery, see: **E. AMERICAN POST-IMPRESSIONISM/MODERNISM** •30:

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.
Exit the **LANE GALLERY** through the glass doors; proceed to the right and traverse the galleries containing works from Oceania, Africa and the Ancient Americas. Continue into the **WEST WING**, and turn right. When you reach the Remis Auditorium across from the entrance to the Museum Bookstore and shop, you will see

**•32**: **SELECTIONS** by JENNY HOLZER. What is your “take” on this final object in this phase of the field trip?

This concludes **PHASE ONE**. (It should be about 8:30 pm. it has been a long and hurried trip, but don’t let the Museum bookshop tempt you just yet. There is still a lot of work to do.) Find a quiet place where you can review the events of the last 90 minutes or so.
PHASE TWO
Allow about 65 minutes (Roughly 8:45 to 9:50 p.m.)

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection. What have you seen? 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 on all you have seen since you entered the MFA about an hour ago. What stands out? Did you come away particularly excited or intrigued 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 may want to return to an area or object previously visited. Or may choose to look elsewhere. In any case, when you get to where you want to be, you may or may not meet up with some of your own affinities and interests and feelings. If you do find others drawn to the same artworks that you are attracted to, don’t hesitate to talk together about your respective and collective reactions. Try to be as analytical as possible and free in exchanging ideas with others involved in the same enterprise. Relate your experience to what you 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 object(s) by which you and your study group mates find yourselves intellectually and/or emotionally "affected" (for better or worse). Focus, if you like, on some particular 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. Gradually begin thinking and talking together a bit more comprehensively and analytically about some of the inherently interactive aspects of your "viewing" experience. Feel free to illustrate (sketch) or verbally express, or otherwise show 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 important in producing your experience of it? Can you disentangle the part that your own experience, background, attitudes, etc. play in your engagement with it? How about the roles of context and the object itself? Is it possible to situate the "quality"- that you perceive?

Can it be localized?
Is it an attribute of the object?
Is it in the proverbial "beholder's eye"?
Or does it arise out of a relationship between/among 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 notions of what you are "supposed to be thinking and feeling"?

As already noted: you have only about 65 minutes in which to complete PHASE TWO (roughly from 8:45 - 9:50 p.m.). At around 9:40 pm the guards will begin indicating that "the museum is closing." Check your watch. You probably still have a few minutes remaining, and you may be able to linger a bit longer, but make sure that you have made your way back to the HUNTINGTON ENTRANCE and the bus by 9:50PM. The bus will leave promptly at 9:55 p.m. for the return trip to our starting point at MIT.
Note: in order to prepare more effectively for our next class, we need to know **TONIGHT**, the exact names and dates and precise locations within the museum of the artworks that you singled out for closer consideration in **PHASE TWO**.

Accordingly, before leaving the museum, please fill out the appended Reaction Form. We will collect the completed forms on the bus during the return trip.

There will be a brief detour for a further “water quality experience” on the return trip. Somewhere behind the MFA, the bus will pause for a few minutes at a point with a view of and convenient access to, the Muddy River, Where the instructors will identify it and relate it to Olmsted’s “emerald necklace for Boston,” and otherwise expatiate on the subject of “Quality in urban design and the primacy of water in everyday life and the meaning of the term “Back Bay” and the topological history of Boston, etc.” The position of the Muddy in the nested hierarchies of local and regional watershed units will be touched upon again.

There will also be intermediate stops on the Boston side of the river for those who live there and at the 77 Mass Ave. Entrance for those who live on the west side of campus. Study groups are responsible for accounting for the presence of all of their members before we can leave the museum for the return trip.

We also want you to give us your overall impressions of the three hours that you spent this evening “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.”
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences
9.68/05  -Affect: ...-

REATION FORM

Field trip to the Boston museum of fine arts (mfa)-- february 23, 2005.
Note: in previous years, we’d have you do this at MFA before leaving: Remove this page from the guide, complete it as instructed and turn in to us on the bus, before arrival back at mit, so that we can collate the entries. Now all we ask is that you return it to us before tomorrow midday via email.

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.

1
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?

2
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?)

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YOUR REACTION:

______________________________________________________________

Do you have a digital photo?
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS and FURTHER REMARKS (Please turn over):
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