

HELPFUL DETAILS



- Each tour stop is marked with its number from the Garden Map, available in the Walker's Main Lobby.
- Some artworks have only certain parts that can be touched. Guidelines are described here to help make your visit easier and more fun.

NUMBER OF STOPS ON THE TOUR

6

TIME TO COMPLETE

60 min.

GRADES

6–12

LOCATION

Minneapolis Sculpture Garden/
Wurtele Upper Garden, Walker
Art Center

IMPORTANT RULES



On this tour, many of the artworks can be touched. These are indicated with this symbol.



This symbol means that an artwork can't be touched. Please don't touch or climb on the sculptures unless a sign or label says it's allowed.

Self-guided Tour of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden

Art That Moves Us

Welcome! With this tour focused on sculptures that can be touched or interacted with physically in some way, you'll create memorable and active experiences for learning about contemporary art. Venture across a bridge, take photos that play with scale, seek out a special message on a bench, go underground to take a look up at the sky, and more. Designed for teachers or adults leading groups in grades 6–12, this guide provides helpful information about the featured artworks as well as discussion questions to encourage critical thinking about key themes and ideas during and after the tour.

HOW TO USE THIS TOUR PLAN

Download the PDF to your smartphone or tablet or print copies prior to arrival at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. (If printing is an obstacle, we can help! Please email tours@walkerart.org a day in advance.)

Tour Stops

INTRODUCTION

There are six artworks included on this tour. The first four are in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and the final two are located in the Wurtele Upper Garden. To make wayfinding easier, grab a garden map from the Main Lobby desk inside the Walker or access it online [here](#).

TOUR STOPS



1 *Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge*



2 *Spoonbridge and Cherry*



3 *Black Vessel for a Saint*



4 *Selections from The Living Series*



5 *Privileged Points*



6 *Sky Pesher, 2005*

Stop 1

18

Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge

Artist: Siah Armajani
(US, b. Iran, 1939–2020)

Date: 1988

Materials: steel, wood, paint,
concrete, brass



This bridge also happens to be a work of art. Find your way over to the blue and yellow pedestrian bridge and take the stairs or the ramp up to the top.

Siah Armajani, *Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge*, 1988



BACKGROUND INFO

- Throughout his life, artist Siah Armajani was interested in mathematics, engineering, and architecture. He is best known today for his works of public art, including bridges, gazebos, and gardens that can be found across the United States and in Europe.
- Armajani moved to the Twin Cities from Iran in 1960 and lived here until his death in 2020.
- The *Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge* is 375 feet long and spans 14 lanes of traffic. This colorful walkway connects Loring Park with the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.
- The work is named in honor of Irene Hixon Whitney (1926–1986), a prominent Minnesotan who was a patron of the arts.
- Armajani asked his friend John Ashbery to write a poem for the bridge inspired by the theme of crossing from one space to another. You can read the poem on the upper beam while walking along the bridge, from one end to the other. To hear a recording of Ashbery reading his poem, [click here](#).

Gift of the Minneapolis Foundation/Irene Hixon Whitney Family Founder-Advisor Fund, the Persephone Foundation, and Wheelock Whitney, with additional support and services from the Federal Highway Administration, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the City of Minneapolis, and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1988

Discussion Prompts

Take your time walking across the bridge. Notice its artistic elements—the paint colors, the architectural design, the poem attached to the steel beams. How do these details affect your experience of the bridge?

What's your favorite place to stand on this bridge? Why?

“My intention is to build open, available, useful, common, public gathering places,” Armajani has said of his work. Has he achieved this goal with the *Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge*? Why or why not?

This bridge is different than most others because it is an artwork. What makes this bridge an artwork in your opinion?

Here's the full text from John Ashbery's poem on the bridge:

And now I cannot remember how I would
have had it. It is not a conduit (confluence?) but a place.
The place, of movement and an order.
The place of old order.
But the tail end of the movement is new.
Driving us to say what we are thinking.
It is so much like a beach after all, where you stand
and think of going no further.
And it is good when you get to no further.
It is like a reason that picks you up and
places you where you always wanted to be.
This far, it is fair to be crossing, to have crossed.
Then there is no promise in the other.
Here it is. Steel and air, a mottled presence,
small panacea
and lucky for us.
And then it got very cool.



The next stop on the tour is the giant spoon and cherry sculpture in the center of the Garden. Make your way over there when everyone is ready.

Stop 2

19

Spoonbridge and Cherry

Artists: Claes Oldenburg (Sweden, b. 1929) and Coosje van Bruggen (Netherlands, b. 1942)

Date: 1985–1988

Materials: aluminum, stainless steel, paint



Please do not touch the artwork or enter the water.

Claes Oldenburg, *Spoonbridge and Cherry*, 1985–1988



Gift of Frederick R. Weisman in honor of his parents, William and Mary Weisman, 1988; ©Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen

BACKGROUND INFO

- Artist Claes Oldenburg has created important works of Pop Art, performance art, and installation art. Together, he and Coosje van Bruggen (pronounced “Coosh-eh van Broo-ghen”), his artistic partner and wife, became well known for their large-scale public sculptures of everyday items such as an ice cream cone, bowling pins, and carpentry tools.
- In the mid 1980s, when the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden was being designed, the Walker invited the artists to create a fountain that would serve as the park’s central focal point.
- Oldenburg wanted to make a sculpture of a monumental spoon, but van Bruggen felt that it needed something else and suggested that they include the giant cherry.
- The pond around the sculpture is in the shape of a seed from a linden tree, a very common tree in Minnesota.
- *Spoonbridge and Cherry* is a working fountain. In the warmer months of the year, you can see (and on windy days, feel!) the spray coming from the cherry stem. It is turned off during the winter months. An underground water tank helps to save and recycle the water, as illustrated on the nearby sign.
- This artwork is the most famous sculpture in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and has become an iconic symbol of the Twin Cities.

Discussion Prompts

Without a doubt, this sculpture is one of the most (if not the most) photographed artworks in the Twin Cities. Why do you think that people are so drawn to this work?

Unlike the other artworks on this tour, this sculpture can't be touched or stepped on. However, there are many creative ways to interact with it in photos! By framing the shot just right from a distance, you can make it look like you are about to eat the cherry or are holding the spoon. Find creative ways to photograph yourself and a partner with *Spoonbridge and Cherry* so that it looks like you are physically interacting with the sculpture.



Once everyone is finished taking photos, walk the short distance to the black, cylinder-shaped structure. That's your next stop!

Stop 3

12

Black Vessel for a Saint

Artist: Theaster Gates
(US, b. 1973)

Date: 2017

Material: brick, granite, Cor-Ten steel, concrete statue of Saint Laurence



You can walk inside and touch the black bricks.



Please do not touch the statue of Saint Laurence.

Theaster Gates, *Black Vessel for a Saint*, 2017



BACKGROUND INFO

- Artist Theaster Gates was born and raised in Chicago, where he lives and works today. He is known for renovating and revitalizing buildings in historically Black neighborhoods across the city's South Side. His work often creates new spaces for people to gather.
- Gates is the founder of the Rebuild Foundation, a platform for art, cultural development, and neighborhood transformation for African American communities. The group's three core values are "black people matter, black spaces matter, and black objects matter," which align with Gates's artistic practice.¹
- The statue housed inside *Black Vessel for a Saint* belonged to the Saint Laurence Church in the predominantly African American neighborhood of South Shore, Chicago.
- The church was an important architectural landmark for more than 100 years. Gates frequently walked past it on the way to his studio. When he learned that the building was going to be torn down, he received permission to salvage this statue of Saint Laurence, the patron saint of libraries and archives. The artist covered the statue with black tar, commonly used as a roofing material, before placing it inside this brick vessel.
- The bricks used here are made from recycled materials that were specially dyed black.
- Watch a short video story about this artwork on your phone or in the classroom. Find Garden Stories at walkerart.org/garden-stories.

Commissioned by the Walker Art Center with funds provided by the Frederick R. Weisman Collection of Art, the Martin and Brown Foundation, the Butler Family Fund, the Justin Smith Purchase Fund, and Marilyn and Larry Fields, 2017

Discussion Prompts

Walk inside the structure and spend a moment or two just looking and listening—try not to talk, just experience the place. How does it feel to be in this space?

Go back outside, and come back in. This time, pay careful attention to how the sound, temperature, light, and other sensory experiences change when you go from outside the vessel to inside. What do you notice?

Why do you think Gates chose to make the bricks black? How would the experience or meaning of the work change if it were another color, say blue or yellow?

The artist has explained his interest in salvaging buildings, materials, and objects doomed for demolition: “There’s life inside these materials that people don’t see, and it’s my job to make that life evident.”² What do you think he means by this?



Head back to the other side of *Spoonbridge and Cherry* and find the central, tree-lined pathway that leads back to the Walker building. It is lined with 28 granite benches, which are the next destination on the tour.

Stop 4

29

Selections from *The Living Series*

Artist: Jenny Holzer
(US, b. 1950)

Date: 1989

Material: granite



Note for teachers: A few of the texts in this artwork make mild references to sex.

Jenny Holzer, *Selections from The Living Series*, 1989



Gift of Edward R. Bazinet with appreciation for the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and contemporary art, 1993; ©Jenny Holzer/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

BACKGROUND INFO

- Visual artist and writer Jenny Holzer uses language to create art that explores social and political issues ranging from feminism and poverty to the spread of nuclear weapons.
- Holzer wants to reach a wide audience, and she typically places her work in public spaces where it can be seen by passersby.
- These 28 granite sculptures are each engraved with a different short text written by the artist.
- Some of the thought-provoking texts are meant to be funny, while others are intended to be mysterious, instructional, or prompt a range of emotional responses.

Discussion Prompts

Read the texts on several different benches. When you find one that you like or think is interesting, sit down on it.

What drew you to the text on your bench? If anyone is sitting near you, share with each other what your benches say and why you chose them.

Take some time to read more of the benches. How would you describe the tone and messages of these texts? Is there a common theme? Discuss together as a group.



Continue south down the pathway toward the Walker. Cross the street (at the crosswalk) and head up the grassy hillside toward the three sculptures that resemble noodles.

Stop 5

55

Privileged Points

Artist: Nairy Baghramian
(Germany, b. Iran, 1971)

Date: 2017

Materials: bronze, paint



Nairy Baghramian, *Privileged Points*, 2017



Commissioned by the Walker Art Center with funds provided by the Heithoff Family, 2017

BACKGROUND INFO

- Artist Nairy Baghramian (pronounced Ny-ree Bah-grah-mee-en) was born in Iran and now lives and works in Berlin, Germany.
- She is known for creating sculptures, photographic works, and drawings that explore relationships between architecture, everyday objects, and the human body. Some of her artworks, including *Privileged Points*, question or challenge the definition of sculpture.
- These three *Privileged Points* appear soft and bendable, but in reality, they were cast in bronze and painted.
- These sculptures are called *Privileged Points* because they sit on spots that the artist considers to be ideal places for displaying artworks.
- Before the works were installed, Baghramian came to the Walker and took in the views from the hillside in order to select the specific locations for each sculpture.

Discussion Prompts

Consider the title of this artwork: *Privileged Points*. What does the word “privilege” mean? What comes to mind when you hear this word?

Take some time to sit on all three of the sculptures, taking in the view from each. In your opinion, which of these points is most privileged? Why?



The final stop on the tour is tucked away farther up the hillside. Follow the zig-zag pathway up the hill until you come to a doorway leading into an underground room. Once you arrive, head inside!

Stop 6

51

Sky Pesher, 2005

Artist: James Turrell
(US, b. 1943)

Date: 2005

Materials: pigmented cast concrete, concrete, paint, cold-cathode lighting, computerized dimming device



Though it is open year-round, this artwork can be difficult to access in winter due to snow and ice on the pathway.

James Turrell, *Sky Pesher, 2005, 2005*



Commissioned with funds provided by the Frederick R. Weisman Collection of Art, 2006; ©James Turrell

BACKGROUND INFO

- Artist James Turrell uses light and optical effects to create installations similar to this one all over the world. His artworks range in scale from small chambers or rooms to the massive crater of an extinct volcano.
- Turrell calls his outdoor rooms “Skyspaces.” These are typically enclosed, underground spaces with a square, round, or oval opening in the ceiling that offers a specific view of the sky.
- He often combines natural sunlight with artificial LED lights and computer-controlled sensors to enhance the colors of the sky during sunrise and sunset.
- The word *pesher*, from the artwork’s title, is a Hebrew word meaning “interpretation.”
- One of the most important aspects of Turrell’s art is the calming environment it creates. By including large built-in benches, the artist presents a peaceful place for us to sit, rest, and reflect.

Discussion Prompts

Take a few minutes to sit and experience the artwork. What word would you use to describe this space? How do you think the artist wanted us to feel in this room?

Turrell's Skyspaces allow us to focus intently on the sky and perhaps see it in a new way. What do you notice about the sky as you look up through the opening in the ceiling? What's different about seeing the sky this way? How do you think this room changes throughout the day (sunrise, noon, dusk, night)?

As the artist has described, "My work has no object, no image and no focus. With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought."³ What do you think he means by this?

AFTER YOUR TOUR

If you are with a group, take a few minutes to talk about the artworks you've seen today. If you have extra time, we encourage you to go back into the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden to explore more sculptures. Please note that most of the other sculptures can't be touched. If an artwork can be touched, it will say so on a label or sign.

Remember, you can come back to the Garden any time—this public park is open year-round!

The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is a project of the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board.

¹"Rebuild Foundation," Theaster Gates, <https://www.theastergates.com/project-items/rebuild-foundation>.

²Garden Stories: Black Vessel for a Saint, Walker Art Center, <https://walkerart.org/garden-stories-black-vessel-for-a-saint-theaster-gates/>.

³"Blinded by the light: James Turrell obliterates the senses in stunning new Mona wing," interview with Brigid Delaney, published January 25, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/26/blinded-by-the-light-james-turrell-obliterates-the-senses-in-stunning-new-mona-wing>.

Walker Tour Programs are sponsored by
UNITED HEALTH FOUNDATION*

This project is made possible in part by the
Institute of Museum and Library Services.



Education and Public Programs are supported
by the Hearst Foundation.