Welcome! With this tour focused on sculptures that can be touched, you'll create memorable and active experiences for learning about contemporary art. Climb up on a swing, venture across a bridge, sit in a bronze chair, gather inside a templelike room, and go underground to take a look up at the sky. Getting from one spot to the next is also an adventure on the Walker’s interactive “Please Touch!” tour of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

Designed for teachers and adults leading groups in grades K–5, this guide provides helpful information about the featured art-works as well as activity ideas to engage students during and after the tour. Student worksheets are included at the end of the document.

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

45–60 min.

GRADES

K–5

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.

HOW TO USE THIS TOUR PLAN

- Print a copy for all chaperones leading students during your visit or download the PDF on a tablet or mobile device.
- Print a copy of the student worksheet for everyone in the group. (If printing is an obstacle, we can help! Please email tours@walkerart.org a day in advance.)
- Provide pencils for students to use during the tour. (If needed, a limited number of pencils are available to borrow from the Main Lobby desk.)
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. September Room (Room with Two Reclining Figures and Composition with Long Verticals)
2. Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge
3. Arikidea
4. Black Vessel for a Saint
5. Sky Pesher, 2005
6. Privileged Points
Stop 1

Mark Manders, *September Room (Room with Two Reclining Figures and Composition with Long Verticals)*, 2017

**BACKGROUND INFO**

- Parts of this sculpture may look like wood or clay, but everything that you see here is actually made of bronze.

- Artist Mark Manders cast each of the five pieces in bronze. Next, he coated the three faces with seven layers of paint to make them look like clay. The painting process took two weeks to complete.

- With this work, the artist wanted to create a space that feels like a room in a building. This could explain his choice to include furniture pieces like chairs and a record player.

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*September Room (Room with Two Reclining Figures and Composition with Long Verticals)*

Artist: Mark Manders (Netherlands, b. 1968)

Date: 2017

Material: bronze

You can touch and sit on the chairs.

Please do not touch the large face sculptures or any other parts of the artwork.
Activity Ideas

1. Run, Look, Repeat
   a. Invite students to run onto the grassy area that surrounds this sculpture.
   b. Give them 10 seconds to look at the different parts of the artwork. After 10 seconds, they should run back outside the sculpture’s quadrant.
   c. Talk about what they observed.
   d. Invite them to go back in again and look more carefully, this time for 30 seconds. Discuss with the group. Repeat again for 60 seconds, then for 90 seconds. What new things do the students notice with more and more time?

2. Challenge the group to find the sculpture of a record player hiding in this artwork. (Hint: it’s under one of the chairs!)

3. Students can do the short fill-in-the-blank activity for this artwork on their worksheets.

Discussion Questions

● Why do you think visitors are allowed to touch the chairs, but not the faces?

● Why do you think the artist named this sculpture September Room?

Next, move to the bright blue and yellow bridge that connects the Garden to Loring Park.
Stop 2

Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge
Artist: Siah Armajani (US, b. Iran, 1939–2020)
Date: 1988
Materials: steel, wood, paint, concrete, brass

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 artwork is named in honor of Irene Hixon Whitney (1926–1986), a prominent Minnesotan who was a patron of the arts.

● All along the bridge, from one end to the other, is a poem written for this artwork by the artist’s friend John Ashbery. You can read the poem while walking on the bridge from either side. To hear John Ashbery reading his poem, click here.
The poem is inspired by the theme of crossing from one space to another.

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.

Activity Ideas

1. As a group, walk the length of the bridge and read the poem out loud.

2. Find a place to sit down on the bridge, making sure to leave room for pedestrians to pass. Discuss the different sounds and sights that everyone notices from their spot.

3. In the space provided on the worksheet, students can write an acrostic poem inspired by their experience on the bridge.

Discussion Questions

1. What different colors do you see on this bridge? Why do you think the artist chose these colors? If you were in charge of the design, which colors would you select?

2. In your opinion, what makes this bridge an artwork? How is this bridge different from other bridges?
Stop 3

Arikidea
Artist: Mark di Suvero (US, b. China, 1933)
Date: 1977–1982
Material: Cor-Ten steel, steel, wood

IMPORTANT RULE
For safety, only four people are allowed on the swing platform at a time.

BACKGROUND INFO

- Artist Mark di Suvero uses “non-art” materials, like the massive metal beams in Arikidea, to create his large-scale works of art. Many of his sculptures move when people interact with them.

- Before di Suvero became a full-time artist, he was a construction worker. Many of his sculptures include building materials like the steel beams in Arikidea, which came from a New York skyscraper that was demolished.

- The title of the sculpture comes from the Greek word “arachnid,” which means spider.

- Di Suvero likes to make artworks for outdoor spaces, where more people are able to see them. As of January 2019, only one of his artworks was placed in an indoor setting—the others can be found in parks or public spaces around the world.
Activity Ideas

1. Let’s swing! Small groups of 3–4 students at a time can stand on the platform and gently rock it/make it sway. As they stand on the platform, invite them to look up and imagine themselves caught in a spider web. Notice how other parts of the sculpture also move. Make sure to rotate the students on the swing every 30 seconds or so.

2. While a few students are swinging, play an animal game with the rest of the group. When you call out an animal name (cat, elephant, bird), students have to immediately start acting like that animal! Change it up for a few rounds of fun.

3. Once everyone is finished on the swing, form a circle and have a seat. Students can design their own sculpture of their favorite animal on their worksheets.

From here, you should be able to see a black cylindrical tower. This is the next artwork on the tour, so follow the pathway around when you are ready to move on.
Stop 4

**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. For the best experience, keep group size to 15 students or less inside the structure. From time to time, the sculpture may be closed for maintenance.

**BACKGROUND INFO**

- Artist Theaster Gates is known for creating artworks using recycled, everyday items.
- The bricks used here are made from recycled materials that were specially dyed black.
- Gates saved the statue of Saint Laurence from a church in his hometown of Chicago when he learned that the building was going to be demolished. He coated the statue with a black, tarlike material commonly used in roofing. Saint Laurence is the patron saint of libraries and archives.
- The artist wanted this sculpture to be a place for reflection and a gathering place open to all people.
Activity Ideas

1. Outside/Inside! Stand in a circle outside the sculpture. Go around the circle, ask each student to say one word that comes to mind when looking at the artwork. Then, enter the structure together and stand in a circle again. (This works best if group size is 15 students or fewer.) Do the same exercise, now saying a word that comes to mind when standing inside. Compare and contrast how it feels to be inside the sculpture versus outside.

2. For the art classroom: Think of some examples of common things made from recycled materials. Collect a variety materials to reuse, such as food wrappers, popsicle sticks, and aluminum cans, etc., and make a group artwork as a class using only what you've found.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a vessel? Why do you think the artist calls this structure a vessel?

2. How does it feel to be inside of this artwork? What do you notice? Students can share their experience with a partner or write about it on their worksheets.
Sculpture Walk

The next tour stop is across the street on the hillside next to the Walker. It takes a few minutes to get there, so play a game of Sculpture Walk on the way over.

The instructions are simple: Designate a “lead” chaperone or teacher. When the leader raises both hands up to the sky, everyone in the group has to freeze like a sculpture in whatever position they are in at the time. When the leader’s hands go down, everyone can unfreeze. Students will have to pay careful attention to the lead so that they know when it’s time to freeze … or time to keep moving!
Stop 5

Sky Pesher, 2005
Artist: James Turrell (US, b. 1943)
Date: 2005
Materials: pigmented cast concrete, concrete, paint, cold-cathode lighting, computerized dimming device

This artwork can be a little challenging to find the first time. Head up the hill and look for a zig-zag pathway that leads to a room built into the hillside. Once inside, have a seat on the benches and take a moment to get comfortable and look around.

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

BACKGROUND INFO

- Artist James Turrell is famous for creating outdoor rooms like this one, with a very large opening in the ceiling that frames a view of the sky. Some also have benches for seating.

- He calls these rooms “Skyspaces” and has built them all around the world.

- At sunrise and at sunset, lights inside the space turn on and slowly change color. The shifting light, both inside and outside, also changes how we see the colors of the sky.

- The opening in the ceiling is never closed, even in the rain or on the snowiest days of winter.
Activity Ideas

1. While sitting and looking up at the sky, lead everyone in a meditative exercise. Take a deep breath in for 5 seconds and breathe out for 5 seconds. Repeat until you feel peaceful and calm.

2. Notice how sound carries in this artwork. Start by humming a note all together at a low volume. Then, gradually make it louder until you’re humming as loudly as you can. Next, gradually lower the volume of the hum until the group is silent.

3. Look up at the sky for several minutes. As a group, notice whether the view changes or stays the same. Does an airplane or bird fly over? Do the clouds move or pass by? What else do you notice?

4. Students can write a description of the sky and draw what they see on their worksheets.

5. Take this time to reflect on and talk about everyone’s favorite sculptures from today’s visit.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think the room would feel during sunrise? During sunset?

2. How do you think the artist wanted us to feel in this room?

3. What do you notice about the sky? What sounds do you hear?

End the tour with some play time. Head over to the sculptures on the hillside that look like three big noodles and let the kiddos climb to their hearts’ content.
Stop 6

Privileged Points
Artist: Nairy Baghramian (Germany, b. Iran, 1971)
Date: 2017
Materials: bronze, paint

Nairy Baghramian, *Privileged Points*, 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.

- These sculptures might at first appear to be soft and bendable, but they’re not! Actually, they are made of painted bronze.

- Why is the sculpture called *Privileged Points*? These three sculptures sit on spots that the artist considers to be the best places for displaying artworks.

- Before the sculptures were placed here, Baghramian came to the Walker and took in the views from the hillside. She chose these specific locations and colors for each sculpture.
Activity Ideas

1. As they climb, ask:
   - Which of these three sculptures has the best view?
   - Which color do you like best?

2. Challenge students to come up with a new title for this artwork and write it on their worksheets or share it out loud with the rest of the group!
Thank you for visiting!

If you have more 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!
Please Touch!

My name: ____________________________

Today’s date: ________________________

Stop 1

This sculpture makes me think __________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

September Room (Room with Two Reclining Figures and Composition with Long Verticals)

This sculpture makes me feel __________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Stop 2

John Ashbery’s poem:

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.

Now you can become the poet! Write an acrostic poem about this bridge.

B

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I

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G

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Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge
Stop 3

Design your own animal sculpture!

My favorite animal is ______________. If I made this animal into a sculpture, it would look like this:

Arikidea

Stop 4

When I’m inside this sculpture, I feel ______________________

_____________________________

_____________________________

Black Vessel for a Saint
Stop 5

Today, the sky looks ________________________.

Draw what you see in the sky above or imagine what you might see here if you were looking all day long:

Sky Pesher, 2005

Stop 6

If I could rename this artwork, I would call it ________________________

______________________________.

My favorite part of my visit to the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden was:

______________________________.

Privileged Points