

Inspired by *Hornbill mask for Poro society*, Liberia, Mano people, 19th century, 73.9

Oh Mighty Hornbill

Oh Mighty Hornbill,
Seek me out with your squinted eyes.
Forgive me for being so bashful in your presence.
You, Oh Mighty Hornbill,
Bring life, love, light, and loyalty to your people.
Fend off enemies with your razor sharp bill
And greet allies with your halcyon feathers.

Oh Mighty Hornbill,
I'm dreadfully sorry we have only been taught,
hatred and the ways of killing.

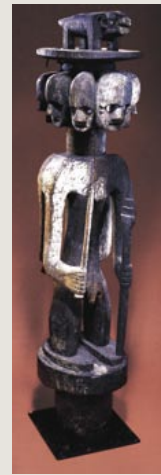
The dried blood engraved on your forehead.
Although your eyes witnessed everything,
From companionship to betrayal and life to death.
Your firm mind spends its time

trying to force these thoughts away.
Others make it hard.
Oh honorable human,
I don't seek revenge,
not all of us are taught
the good ways.

Cedric Dageville,
5th grade
Foster City Elementary



Inspired by *Shrine figure or bush spirit with seven heads*, Nigeria, Cross River, Igo people, 20th century, 2004.93



The Hunter

I am the soul
The vitality
I am the rage
Madness
The heart
The feeling
I watch
I prey
The animals I hunt
Are Dreams
Nightmares
I am the eternal
watcher

I am the spirit
Soul
Wind
Water
Trees
Fire
I am the ever-seeing

Caslon Kahle, 5th grade
Presidio Hill

Inspired by *Master drum for a civic brotherhood*, Ghana, Ekumfi, town of Supudu, Fante people, early 20th century, 1980.73

Master Drum

A drum is one of the things that gives me a real special feeling.

But what I hate is what animals go through, yet it makes
a beautiful sound. All the Beauty and uniqueness of it.

It is like the beat of an animal heart. That in order
to play it correctly you have to put your heart
and mind into it. The beautiful carving of
animals really make you think. Yet
when I look at the one right in front
of my eyes, now I see animals
seeking their prey and a man
fighting for skin to make his
own unique drum, and the
animal pleading not to get
killed or hurt. It almost makes
you want to cry seeing how
something so sad can turn
into something so beautiful.



Maya Lopez, 5th grade
Kaiser Elementary

About the Poet: devorah major

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
Poet-in-Residence devorah major is an
award-winning poet and novelist. She served
as San Francisco's Poet Laureate from 2002
to 2005. Her poetry books include *where
river meets ocean*, *street smarts*, and *with
more than tongue*. She has two published
novels, *An Open Weave* and *Brown Glass
Windows*, and is featured on several poetry
and jazz recordings including *Daughters
of Yam's The Tongue is a Drum*. She also
has had poems, short stories, and articles
published in numerous anthologies and
periodicals. Former executive director of
California Poets in the Schools, devorah
major has taught poetry for more out twenty
years and is currently an adjunct professor
at California College of the Arts. She has
performed her work across the United
States, and in Jamaica, England, Wales,
France, Italy, and Bosnia.

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Poets
in the Galleries

de Young

Fine Arts
Museums of
San Francisco

Fall 2007

de Young

Poets in the Galleries

Inspired by *Altar*, Indonesia, Nias, 20th century, 2005.140.4

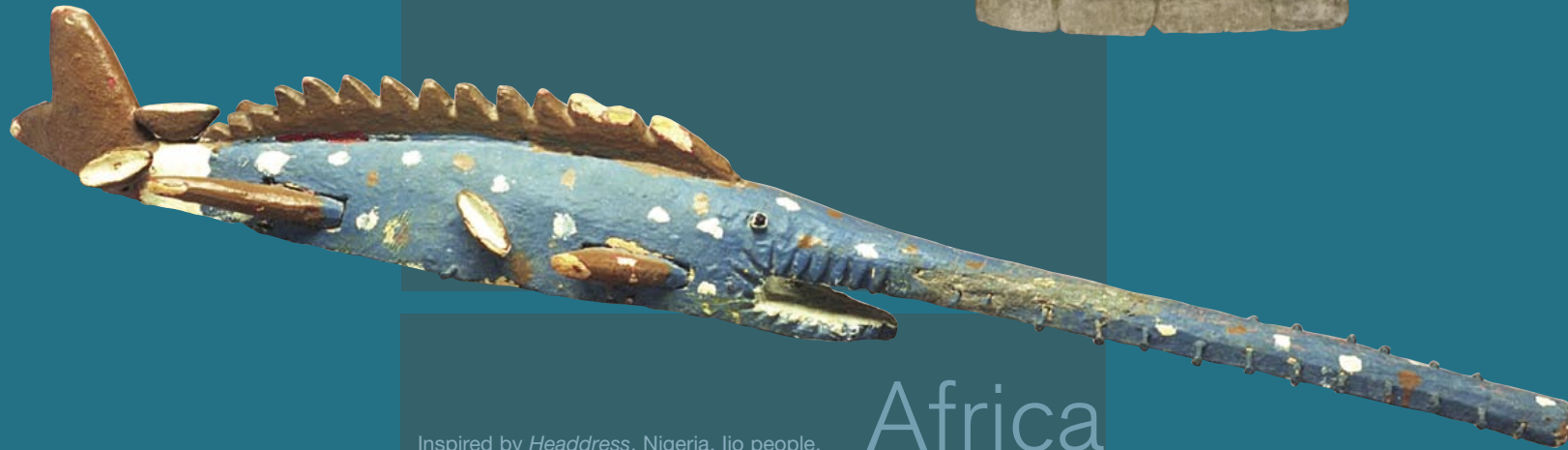
Dragon

I'm a lonely dragon frozen into stone.
Waiting to be free
to share my Beauty with others.
Nothing happens. I'm a lonely dragon.

Aiden Lonsky, 4th/5th grade
Ohlone Elementary



Oceania



Inspired by *Headdress*, Nigeria, Ijo people, ca. mid-20th century, 1991.87.6

Water Spirit Mask

The water spirit mask
gliding over the water.
Gliding gently below
the shining moon.
The water spirit mask
that controls the water.
Thank you water spirit mask
for giving us water.
Thank you water spirit.
Thank you.

Jason Chen, 4th/5th grade
Jefferson Elementary

Africa

Poets in the Galleries

de Young

Introduction

More than 1,000 students from twenty-three Bay Area schools participated in the spring **Poets in the Galleries** program inaugurating the program's return to the new de Young Museum. They toured various galleries led by Poet-in-Residence devorah major or one of the guest poets, Giovanni Singleton and Susan Terence. Each of the poets used her own strategies—offering insights into the history and/or purpose of the art objects and using a uniquely individual approach to the craft of poetry—to help the young people investigate each art object, be it sacred or ordinary, be it created for special occasions or used as an everyday tool. Then, as each student chose one piece that called to him or her, the students described what they saw, asked their own questions, and considered their own feelings. Sitting in front of the selection each wrote a poem about it, to it, or from the object's point of view. What follows is a small selection of the best of the best of the poems in the school years 2005–2006 and 2006–2007.

devorah major,
Poet-in-Residence
June 2007

**For more information
please call
415-750-3640**

Oceania

Inspired by *Figure of divinity*, probably a goddess, Caroline Islands, Nakuoro Atoll, 1656–1823, L05.26.1

Figure of Divinity

I was once like you
a body, a woman.
I once was a warrior,
tall and proud.
I once was a goddess,
admired by all.

But now with my features
all worn away, I stand alone
away from my country—
my arms at my side
my legs so still
but I hold my head
though I stand alone
forgotten.

Charlie Duliik, 6th grade, Crystal Springs Uplands



Inspired by *Gable mask from ceremonial house facade*, Middle Sepik, Sawos people, 20th century, 2000.172.7

Gable Mask

You look down on me
with your eyes
Watching my every move
Watching my soul.
You stick your tongue out at me
like you want me to go away.
But your eyes welcome me
as if you want me to stay.

Kate Lehmann, 4th grade
Katherine Delmar Burke



Inspired by *Chief's ceremonial fan*, Polynesia, Marquesas Island, 19th century, 1984.12

Oh great fan of bound grass,
how many great chieftains' faces
have you shielded from
the bright glare of the sun?
Beating down,
waiting in stillness of the battle,
keeping the pests away.
You are turned down,
forgotten as the battle rages.
Your ornate handle watches it all
and bears witness
to the tragic day.

Chris McConnell, 8th grade,
Valley View Middle School



Inspired by *Spirit board*, Gulf of Papua, Kerawo people L05.1.75

Spirit Board

Why do you sit and stare
Looking into space.
Your beautiful designs
remind me
of sadness.
I want to put you on
and share you with others.
I have so many questions.
What are you used for?
What are you made of?
Please tell me.

Caroline Colwell, 4th grade
Del Rey Elementary



Inspired by *Woman's paddle*, Lake Sentani, 19th–early 20th century L05.1.250

Woman's Paddle

Boom, splash, swish
Boom, splash, swish
The booming of my
father's drum
As I pass him by in my
canoe
boom, Splash, swish
The splashing of the
paddle
hitting the water
as the fish swim away
Boom, splash, Swish
boom, splash, swish
The swishing of my
paddle
pulling me up, forward
Boom, splash, swish
Boom, splash, Swish
My paddle bringing me
up forward,
letting me feel the magical
motion of the water.

Amanda Catherine, 5th grade
Old Mill Elementary



Inspired by *Canoe prow*, Ngati Porou tribe, East Coast, Maori people, 19th century, 5524

Prow

You bind me in a twisting maze of patterns
as your body floats into space.
Your tongue sticks out of your mouth
to warn off other canoes.
Your eyes open and ready to fight.
Your feet paddling as fast as they can.
Pulling what's left of you along
over the ocean.
You make me feel as if death has come.

Sydney Gallion, 4th grade
Crestmont Elementary

Inspired by *Overmodeled ancestor skull*, Middle Sepik, latmul people, 19th–early 20th century, 2001.62.12

Dead, But Stayed Alive Inside

I was once dead
But the love of my family
kept me alive.
I was once lost
But the care of my friends
helped me through.
My eyes, so nearly shut—
I hear the wonder-filled
conversation about me.
I feel nothing but air.
Some say I'm dead,
Some say I'm lost,
But I stayed alive inside.

Monique Therese Ubringen,
4th grade
George Peabody Elementary



Africa

Inspired by *Hover II*, 2004, by El Anatsui (b. 1944), 2004.109

Hover II

golden and bright
reflecting sun
black and red
gold and blue
metallic taste
happy or sad
wild or frozen
puzzle of life

Taylor Forman, 7th grade, Ross Elementary



Inspired by *Ceremonial table or bench*, Nigeria, Benin kingdom, 19th century, 2006.135.1

Images heart—fully carved into me
dancing about, standing there
stuck to me,
singing their song,
that's not song,
but memories,
clouding up—gone

Molly Bond, 4th grade
San Francisco Friends
School



Inspired by *Maternity scene*, Mali, Inland Niger Delta, 1100–1400, 2007.6

Maternity Scene

A woman so carefully grown
Serpents crowd around
like a brown serpent cave.
A child in your hand,
like a proud new mother.
Symbol, Symbol, what is your symbol?
A sign of longevity or immortality.
The symbols of serpents
will live on in peace.

Susanna Zhang, 4th/5th grade
Argonne Elementary

Inspired by *Standing figure*, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lega people, 19th century, 1986.16.5

I am small, but I stand tall
My arms reach for the sky above
My hands reach for the sun
Trying to grasp them
Trying to hold them.

Eli Nash, 5th grade
Havens Elementary



About the Program

Few programs offered in museums relate the language arts to the visual arts. However, through a poetry program, students can enhance their verbal and written skills while learning about and viewing actual objects. Students learn to communicate about visual art through the literary art form of poetry, and in so doing they create their own personal interpretations of the subjects of their poems.

Since 1987 the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco have presented the **Poets in the Galleries** program to students in the fourth through twelfth grades. The specific goal of the program is to introduce students to the visual arts in the museum through an interdisciplinary approach that includes looking, observing, learning about art objects and poetic styles, and listening to and reading poems. The poets select the area of the museum to be used during the poetry sessions, but the students choose the objects that will be the subjects of their poems. They are given ample time to look, think, and reflect, and at the end of the poetry session they are encouraged to read their poems aloud to the class. These student poems highlight the creative spirit and enthusiasm of these Bay Area young people.

Jeannine L. Jeffries,
Assistant Director of Education
June 2007