

Interactive Activity Using an Artifact/Object in a Gallery

Find a cart object/artifact that fascinates you and that you think museum visitors will enjoy learning about!

Purpose: To engage adult visitors in your gallery talk or tour through inviting them to handle an artifact/object/material while they learn about the people, their culture, way of life, and beliefs.

Gallery Name: Spirits and Headhunters

Docent Name: Bill Trammell

Cart Artifact/Object/Approved Material:

(1) Yam mask and (2) Boar tusk nose ornament

Gallery Artifact/Map or Visual/Concept:

Gable mask above entrance to gallery. From Blackwater River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. (20th century)
Gable masks hang high on the roofs and the large ceremonial houses found at the center of Sepik River villages. The masks represent the face of the female house spirit of which the entire house embodies. Nose pieces (as shown on the mask) are not exclusive to male figures.

Connection: What is the relationship between the two items to be presented? Think about how they are made or used or the concept they illustrate. What do they tell you about the people, their culture, way of life, and beliefs?

Items presented tell about the status of males and their relationship to the customs of people in Papua New Guinea.

Interactive activity description: Steps in presenting the activity.

Welcome to the Bowers and the Spirits and Headhunters exhibit. Call attention to the Gable Mask. Ask question about audience use of masks. Talk about the use of masks to invoke fear, obtain spirit help, and show status. Show yam mask and talk about its use. Also show nose ornament, and talk about its use in showing the status of clan males. Mention the parts of the exhibit where visitors will learn more about masks and nose ornaments.

Sample interactive questions (2-3) for the audience:

Masks: Have you ever worn a mask? What were you thinking of what others would think?

Nose ornament: Did you ever meet a man wearing something through his nose?

Cross-cultural connections or related folk tale to engage people further; or research or story books.

What do you think about today's culture of body piercing?

Date approved by the Education Committee: ___ March 22, 2015 ___