

# Double Take: Script / Virtual Tour: UMMA

## **Slide 1: Title**

Double Take

A Virtual Tour: University of Michigan Museum of Art

## **Slide 2: Welcome!**

Welcome to the University of Michigan Museum of Art in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We're called UMMA (ooh-mah) for short. The building has two parts: a new wing and an older section with columns and steps. Inside, there is art everywhere.

## **Slide 3: Join us for a field trip today!**

Join us for a field trip today! Let's imagine that you just arrived at UMMA with your friends and teacher.

## **Slide 4: Entry**

We'll enter the new part of the building. It has a stone floor and high ceilings, so sound echoes. It's exciting to be on a field trip with classmates, and everyone bustles about taking off jackets and finding their chaperones.

## **Slide 5: Small Groups**

Once we settle into small groups, let's explore the art together. We're going to stop at four art works today.

## **Slide 6: Theme**

What will we see? We'll look at art that makes us look twice - do a double take. When we zoom in or out, we'll have more information about the art work, but we also might have more questions. Like, what materials did the artist use? How did she make it? What was her process?

## **Slide 7: Stop 1 Zoom in**

Let's start at our first stop. Here are two zoomed in images. It's difficult to tell what they are. Is this a object we can recognize? They look maybe like pencil drawings or something bumpy. In CloseUp #1, I see empty spaces that look like shining light. When I look very closely at Close Up #2, I see very small circles or loops. Some are dense and close together and others are a little more spread out. They kind of look like empty flower petals to me. If we step back and zoom out, what will be revealed?

## **Slide 8: Stop 1 Full View**

Yikes. The shape of a skull. Walter Oltmann, the artist, bent thin wire into small circle shapes over and over again. The wire clumps together in some areas and it's spread out in others. When this artwork is on the wall, people often walk by and don't see the skull shape. You have

to stand at just the right distance, and the lighting also needs to be just right to create shadows on the wall behind it.

How did the artist figure this out? He experimented. Positive spaces usually seem close to you and negative spaces are the background holes or areas that seem far away. This work is tricky because Walter Oltman flips that around! The light or thin areas, like the curved forehead, look like they pop out towards us and the thick dense areas of wire, like the eye socket, feel like they're caving in.

But what is this about? Why did Walter Oltmann make a skull when he could have made a building or a piece of fruit, or anything else? He's from South Africa, and that is where evidence of some of the earliest humans has been found. He also likes to produce art about bugs, and landscapes, so he doesn't only make skulls, but the ideas in his work are about excavation, science, and life.

### **Slide 9: Optional Activity Paper Clips**

If you are at home and you have paper clips, here's an activity you can try to experiment like Walter Oltman. Unbend your paper clips into somewhat straight lines. Re-bend them into a different shape - maybe a circle, a U-shape, or a triangle. Then repeat that shape many times and connect the wires into a chain or a woven mat. Shine a light through the wires and observe the shadows. You can pause here and try this, or you can do it after the video. If you don't have paper clips, don't worry about it. See what else you can find, or use your fingers to create repeated shadows on the wall.

### **Slide 10: Hey Diddle**

What is this? An egg carton in the art museum? Imagine that a pretty tall grownup was standing next to it. It's twice as tall as her! So it's big. What else can we notice? It looks like the holes are a little bit lighter in color than the out flat surface, and it looks like they may have been scooped out. How many holes are there? 5 across the short way and 9 up and down.  $5 \times 9$  is 45. I don't know if there's a reason that there are 45. Some rows look pretty even and others slope down a bit. Let's zoom in to see what we can discover.

### **Slide 11: Hey Diddle Zoom In**

Oh - it's rough. It looks like hacked out wood. It's cedar, which is hard, so Ursula VonRydingsvard, the artist, needed to use carving tools to scrape out these craters. But as an artist, she had a choice. She could have made them smooth and sanded them down but she chose to leave them in bumpy strips.

People sometimes come to an art museum and they say, "First of all, I really wish I could touch that artwork because it would feel rough on my hands, and I want to put something in those holes. Second of all, it's a cool repeated shape but does it mean anything?" Different visitors have different ideas about that. For example, does the shape remind you of anything? I think of bird nests or walnuts but you may have other ideas. Also, when the artist, Ursula, was young,

she needed to leave her home because of war. She lived in eight different camps, working hard, and always moving around. I wonder if there's a connection between scooping out the wood and feeling displaced - like digging something out and moving it to a new place? That's the great thing about art. It lets us wonder and ask questions.

### **Slide 12: Optional Activity**

Depending on where you live, what you have available, what your grownup says, and the weather (that's a lot of factors), see what you can find to scoop. Dirt, ice cream? What tools would you need, or could you use your hands?

### **Slide 13: Plywood**

Hm. At first glance, this looks like a board. Or maybe four boards together, with some paint rolled on them. If I look closely, I see some red writing and some small nail holes. I was looking at this with a grownup, and he asked me if there was an accident with the wall behind this, because it looks like it would go over a window to board it up. So, what's the big deal? Why is that special, and why is it in an art museum when I could buy it at Home Depot?

### **Slide 14: Plywood Zoom In**

Let's look more closely. This is when it would be so nice to be at the museum in person and look at this artwork up close. It's actually not a board! It's a painting on a canvas, made to look exactly like a piece of plywood, complete with nail holes and paint from a roller. OK.

But why would John Clem Clarke, the artist, want to spend so many hours painting tiny details to make it look like something else? Maybe because it's fun to play a trick. My kids love April Fool's Day, and one of their favorite pranks is to put toothpaste inside of an Oreo and pretend it is frosting. Or switch the salt and sugar so my coffee tastes awful.

Clarke's other paintings are hyper realistic, meaning they look even more real than real. Like an ear of corn with butter melting on it or a piece of bread with craggely crust. Maybe he wants to prove that he can observe very closely and show us what a talented painter he is. He also has paintings that don't look like any recognizable object - they're big brush strokes of thick white and blue paint, smeared on like frosting. So maybe he's interested in exploring the limits of paint and what it can do. What do you think?

### **Slide 15: Optional Activity**

Sometimes, a pencil drawing with shading can look like metal. The graphite in the pencil can glow in the light and look 3D. It's fun to make something flat look like it's jumping out. If you have a pencil and paper, try drawing a curved bowl or cup. Art for Kids Hub on YouTube is also a good place for instructions.

### **Slide 16: Apsara**

Our last stop today is this sculpture called Apsara Warrior. How would you describe what you see? The shape looks like a person, but it's tough to get into the details. Let's do a double take.

**Slide 17: Apsara Zoom In**

It looks like it's made of metal tubes, but specifically it looks like lots of guns, stuck together. The artist, Ouk Vichet, is from Cambodia, a country in Southeast Asia that experienced a war. After the war, there were lots of leftover guns and weapons. The teachers at Vichet's art school made a competition - they challenged all the art students to make sculptures out of the remaining guns. Vichet had lots of choices, and he decided to sculpt an Apsara Warrior, a traditional goddess of peace. During the war, he wasn't allowed to tell Cambodian folk stories or listen to music of his grandparents or dance in a traditional way - the government had strict rules. So after the war, he was so thankful to be able to make art about traditions, he chose the Apsara dancer. These dancers trained for many years and told stories with their hands, like sign language. This specific Apsara dancer is telling a story with her hands. What is it?

And by the way, Ouk Vichet won the competition!

**Slide 18: Optional Activity**

This pose is not easy! See if you can replicate it without falling over. Plant your heels, stick your toes in the air, bend your knees, tuck in your back, elbows out.

**Slide 19: Look Again!**

Thanks for coming to UMMA online today! We did a lot of looking, and looking again. The museum is free and available to all visitors. You are welcome to visit the museum when it is open to see these artworks in person - to look up close and do a double take!