

Animals in Art

A Self-Guided Tour of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden

Age: Students in grades K–3

Before you begin this visit, offer a five- to ten-minute introduction that outlines what the students will be doing in the Garden today. Have the students divide into smaller groups of five to ten people and assign a chaperone to each group. Give a copy of the tour to each chaperone, as they will facilitate the activities and questions for each tour stop beginning with “Setting the Scene.”

Note: A hand icon next to a tour stop indicates a work that can be touched. Please refer to the map for the location of the stops on this self-guided tour.

Overview: This self-guided tour explores sculptures that include animals as their subject or main idea. Take special notice of the size, shape, and materials from which they are made while discussing ways that animals can be represented in a work of art. Each stop has its own theme, which is indicated.

Setting the Scene:

What is your favorite animal? Sometimes artists depict animals in order to tell a story, to remember a childhood memory, to play, or to express an idea. *If you were going to make a work of art about your favorite animal, what would it look like? What size would it be? Would you exaggerate some of the animal’s features to express an idea or make a statement? If so, what would you change?* Let’s take an adventurous walk through the garden to see the different ways artists have incorporated animals in their sculptures.

Stop #1: Jacques Lipchitz, *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II* (1944/1953)

Found in area 8.

Theme: Art that tells a story

Sometimes art can tell a story. Jacques Lipchitz liked to explore themes from mythology. His sculptures often feature the ancient Greek god Prometheus. According to legend, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans, even though he had been warned not to do this by Zeus, king of the gods. Zeus punished Prometheus by chaining him to a rock on a mountain, where a vulture tortured him daily. The wise and compassionate Prometheus battled injustice to help people. He’s like a superhero.

Questions and Activities, Round 1: Walk around the sculpture and check out his muscles. *Who looks stronger, Prometheus or the vulture? Which one is bigger?*

Continue the Story ...

In *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II*, the artist changed the ending of the ancient story. Here Prometheus is free from his chains and fighting back.

Questions and Activities, Round 2: Continue the tale in this game of tag-team storytelling. One player begins by saying the words: “High on a rocky mountain, there lived a ...” The next person adds more to the story. Take turns until you reach “the end.”

Transition: We’ll now move from an animal that flies to an animal that gallops.

Stop #2: Deborah Butterfield, *Woodrow* (1988)

Found between areas 1 and 2.

Theme: Materials

Deborah Butterfield has several horses on her ranch in Montana, where she studies their forms and movements carefully. To make *Woodrow*, she selected sticks, tree branches, and bark, then cast each element individually in bronze. Next, the artist assembled the pieces and welded them into the figure of a horse. She colored the metal surface of the sculpture to add to the illusion that it is made of wood. Look closely to see if you can find what might be the horse’s eye.

Questions and Activities: *What would it be like to ride this horse? If you were going to make a sculpture using your favorite animal, what would it be? What other materials could be used to make sculptures?*

Transition: Our next animal doesn’t fly or gallop. It swims!

Stop #3: Frank Gehry, *Standing Glass Fish* (1986)

Found in area 7.

Theme: Scale

This fish was built by an artist who is also an architect. An architect is a person who designs buildings. Frank Gehry is known for his playful and surprising use of shapes and materials. His childhood experiences are the inspiration for many of his works. He remembers weekly trips to the market with his grandmother: "We would buy live carp. We'd take it home. We'd put it in the bathtub, and I would play with the fish for a day." Later, it was made into gefilte fish for a family meal. Gehry also makes fish-shaped lamps and often includes fish in his drawings and designs for buildings. Look closely at the scales on *Standing Glass Fish*.

Questions and Activities: *Where else in the room can you find this crisscross pattern? How is this sculpture different from the real animal? Why do you think this artist made this sculpture really big?*

Transition: As we walk to the next sculpture with animals, look out for another sculpture that is larger than the real thing. Hint: It's red and often goes on top of an ice cream sundae.

Stop #4: Brower Hatcher, *Prophecy of the Ancients* (1988)

Found in area 5.

Theme: Pattern

Brower Hatcher's stainless-steel mesh structure is filled with floating objects. The futuristic dome of *Prophecy of the Ancients* seems like a map of complex constellations, or perhaps it is a model of a fantastic galaxy.

Questions & Activities: *What everyday objects can you find in this sculpture? How many of the objects are animals and what kinds of animals do you see? What patterns do you see? What does this artwork make you think about?*

Transition: We've just seen animals under a dome and now we'll see an animal leaping over a dome-like shape.

Stop #5: Barry Flanagan, *Hare on Bell on Portland Stone Piers* (1983)

Found in area 5.

Theme: Art that shows movement

Barry Flanagan often mixes and matches animals and objects in surprising ways in his sculptures. He particularly likes the hare because it is a symbol of life and freedom. Flanagan's rabbits are very playful and are sometimes standing on their hind legs, which makes them look more like people.

Questions and Activities: *What is this rabbit doing? How do you move when you jump? How does the artist show movement?*

Transition: Our last animal is an insect. Instead of jumping, it crawls and spins webs.

👉 Stop #6: Mark di Suvero, *Arikidea* (1977–1982)

Found in area 3.

Theme: Art that moves

Mark di Suvero makes artworks using found objects such as metal beams, tires, chains, and other such materials he finds at sites where a building has been torn down or in junkyards. Many of his large-scale sculptures, like this one, invite viewers to swing on a suspended seat. The gigantic steel beams have been carefully balanced so that a simple touch will cause the structure to sway gently. The sculpture's title comes from the Greek word arachnid, meaning "spider." The artist admires spiders because of the ways they gracefully sculpt and suspend their webs in space.

Questions and Activities: *How does this sculpture look like a spider? When it's your turn to take a swing, look up: can you see the beams moving?*

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Map of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden

