

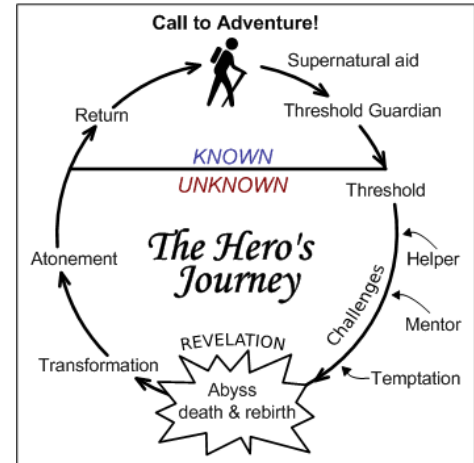
A New Tour: The Hero's Journey

Some Background info

The Hero's Journey is an archetypal story pattern, common in ancient myths as well as modern day adventures.

The concept of the Hero's Journey was described by mythologist Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and refined by Christopher Vogler in his book *The Writer's Journey*. It can be boiled down to three stages:

- Departure: the Hero leaves the familiar world behind.
- Initiation: the Hero learns to navigate the unfamiliar world of adventure.
- Return: the Hero returns to the familiar world.



from: <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheHerosJourney>

More elaborate taxonomies—up to 17 stages and adhering more to Joseph Campbell's original ideas—may be found online. A few of these might be relevant to the tour stops below. For example, sometimes there is a **herald** who calls for adventure or lays out the task. In the Esther story, her uncle serves this role. Another common trope is **spiritual death and rebirth** which could arguably be the point of boys initiation in which they witness the Bovine masquerade.

In the creation of a hero's journey tour in the 21st century, I (Pam Reister) think we also have to consider this:

Campbell's Model is Built for Male Heroes

In large part because of the historical focus of Campbell's analysis, his model for the Hero's Journey describes a character arc that is built for male heroes, emphasizing what are familiar and traditional male choices and male values. ... for example, the hero often leaves his home and his family behind to undertake his adventure, sometimes abandoning his wife and children for years in service of his quest. Or the hero often toils by himself, waging a lone struggle to conquer his adversary. Similarly, the classical Hero's Journey often involves ... a self-aggrandizing pursuit of personal glory and an approach ... that is often militant, aggressive, or macho. ... also is motivated to seek reward or validation from authority figures such as the gods, a king, or his father.

Of course, these sorts of choices and values also may appear in stories with a strong female heroine as the central protagonist – but many such stories will have a far different nature, based in the different choices faced by women and the different values they often possess.

from: <http://fangirlblog.com/2012/04/the-heroines-journey-how-campbells-model-doesnt-fit/>

Possible Tour stops with label information

In some cases there are two different labels providing, we hope, extra useful information.

RENAISSANCE/BAROQUE GALLERY

Jason Sowing the Dragon's Teeth (1978/2.38)

This dish is decorated with a scene from the Classical myth of Jason and the quest for the Golden Fleece. The king of Colchis gives Jason a seemingly impossible three-part task: he must tame and plow a field with two fire-breathing oxen (depicted on the hill in the right background), plant the teeth of a fearsome dragon (also at right), and defeat the army of warriors that sprout from the dragon's teeth.

The title refers to the action that preceded the battle depicted, which arose when Jason threw a stone in the midst of the soldiers. Unable to decipher where the rock came from, the soldiers attacked one another, leaving Jason (in the left foreground) to easily defeat the exhausted survivors and obtain the Golden Fleece.

March 28, 2009

This dish is decorated with a scene from one of the most influential literary sources of Renaissance art, Ovid's "Metamorphoses." The subject here is based on Ovid's telling of the myth of the Golden Fleece, in which the hero Jason tries to wrest the treasure from the King of Colchis. The king attempted to thwart Jason by commanding him to perform an impossible three-stage task in order to win the Fleece. However, with the help of the priestess Medea, Jason accomplished his duties: he tamed two fire-breathing bulls (on the hillock to the right on this plate), planted the teeth of a fearsome dragon (also at right), and defeated the supernatural army that sprouted from the dragon's teeth. In this scene, we see the outcome of that battle: Medea advised Jason to hurl a stone in the midst of the demonic soldiers, which confused them into attacking one another and leaving Jason (at left, with feet apart) to kill the exhausted survivors easily.

A. Dixon, 15th-17th Century Gallery installation, early 1999

Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)

Esther before Ahasuerus(1963/2.45)

In this painting, the Baroque master Guercino depicts a climactic moment from the biblical Book of Esther, when the Jewish heroine risks death to save her people. To appear without summons before Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, was a capital offense.

But an even more threatening royal decree compelled Esther to enter the presence of the king, who was her husband: at the suggestion of a wicked minister, Ahasuerus had proclaimed that every Jew in the realm would be slaughtered on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of that year. In this depiction, Esther approaches Ahasuerus to convince him to rescind his command, but, overcome by fear, she faints. Moved by compassion, Ahasuerus leans forward and extends his scepter, indicating that he forgives her transgression. Guercino portrays the high emotions with consummate dignity and imparts an arresting timelessness to this scene of one woman's courage.

March 28, 2009

This scene is from the Biblical Book of Esther. The painting illustrates the description of the heroine challenging an imperial decree of King Ahasuerus of Persia. The king declared that no one appear in his presence unless summoned; his imperial power is represented by his scepter, which symbolically separates Ahasuerus on his throne and the fainting queen and her handmaidens. Esther had defied the decree in order to ask Ahasuerus to prevent an imminent massacre of Jews in the Persian empire. Ahasuerus honored his beloved queen's request, the plot was foiled, and Esther's people were spared.

The Book of Esther is the only Biblical text that directly discusses the ancient times of the Jewish diaspora; Esther's brave act and the subsequent salvation of her people are the source of the Jewish festival of Purim.

A. Dixon, 15th-17th Century Gallery installation, early 1999

AFRICAN GALLERY

Bijogo

Mask (vaca bruto, dugn'be type)(1984/1.273)

The ox is a major motif in Bidjogo sculpture. This mask representing "dugn'be," an ox raised in the village, is usually painted black, red and white, with eyes cut from the bottom of bottles. The cord through the nostril indicates how the animal is led until it is tamed. Worn by boys before initiation into adulthood status, the mask is an appropriate symbol for the untamed, undirected behavior and energy of preadolescent males. Just as the wild, unpredictable ox is tamed for the benefit of the community, so are the boys instructed and disciplined in correct social behavior.

Exhibition label, African Art from the Museum Collection: A Celebration

Cattle are a central visual theme of people living in the Bijagos archipelago, where they have been associated with power and wealth for at least four centuries. Masks such as this one are still worn by young men undergoing initiation to adult responsibilities. The performer, on his hands and knees, imitates the movements of a bull. As a result, the mask is seen low to the ground and obscured by the dust kicked up in dancing. Details such as the fierce red around the mask's glass eyes and the thick, wrinkled neck (made from a separate piece of wood) make this mask especially expressive.

Dr. Sharon Patton, Associate Professor of Art and Afro-American and African Studies, 2/13/1993

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

Gerome Kamrowski

The Student (L'Etudiante)(1975/1.77)

Technically, this is not a heroic painting but I think students might like to imagine how heroic it is to be a student!! Let them tell you about their journey of discovery in school.

A student of leading European avant-garde artists, a friend and collaborator of New York Abstract Expressionists, and a teacher at the University of Michigan's School of Art and Design, Gerome Kamrowski came to Surrealism in the late 1930s and continued to explore its possibilities for almost two decades.

According to the 1924 Surrealist Manifesto, Surrealism was "pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought." In *The Student*— which perhaps makes playful reference to his experiences as both a student and teacher— Kamrowski creates a self-contained otherworld of shapes and colors. The forms evoke microscopic life, terrestrial existence and the cosmos, woven together by narrow ribbons of color that suggest the canvas is charged with neuro-electrical impulses. The visual elements also imply a seated figure, whose organs are indicated by the white shapes; this is perhaps the student of title, seated in a pose of meditation, whose physical and psychical inner workings are made visible.

March 28, 2009

This small canvas by Kamrowski is woven together by narrow ribbons of color, suggesting a surface charged with neuro-electrical impulses. Spatial ambiguities are created by the layers of overlapping textures and muted colors. Kamrowski's work allows itself to be seen from both cosmic and microscopic levels.

Label copy from exhibition "Dreamscapes: The Surrealist Impulse," August 22 - October 25, 1998

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIAN GALLERY

Indian

Vishnu as Varaha, the Cosmic Boar (2002/1.167)

In Hindu belief, the great god Vishnu appeared in many incarnations or avatars, each designed to save the earth and her inhabitants from impending disaster. Vishnu became the cosmic boar, Varaha, to rescue the earth goddess who had been dragged into the ocean by a demon. In this openwork relief, Varaha stands in a dynamic pose, arranged in a sweeping diagonal from lower left to upper right, as though he had just sprung forth from the murky waters. The earth goddess is securely seated on his upraised left arm, while his left foot rests on a lotus, which is supported by two naga (serpent deity) figures.

This sculpture is a fine example of the way that Hindu icons— images of divine beings meant for veneration or to inspire prayer or meditation—can also be visual narratives, a phenomenon found in Christian and Buddhist art as well. Sculpted images of Varaha are almost always shown in this pose, which captures his triumphant emergence from the ocean; but the lotus and naga figures also indicate where Varaha has been in the immediate past (in the waters), while the host of figures seated in the aureole— including Ganesha, Brahma, and personifications of the planets—seems to suggest the limitless future, where Vishnu is offered veneration by all of the other Hindu gods. Past, present, and future events are linked in a causal sequence. Given the Hindu view of time as cyclical, however, a more orthodox interpretation would see every element of the tale (conquest of the ocean demon, restoration of the earth goddess to her proper place, and veneration of the other gods) as simultaneous, timeless aspects of Vishnu.

Maribeth Graybill, Senior Curator of Asian Art

Exhibited in "Stories from the Past: Narrative in Asian Art "

January 24–July 25, 2004

Indian

Descent of the River Ganges(1979/1.148)

According to an ancient legend, the goddess Ganga (the personification of the River Ganges) once dwelt in heaven, and the earth suffered from drought. Through the prayers of Bhagiratha, the gods agreed to allow Ganga to descend to earth, but that brought about another crisis: if Ganga were to fall unimpeded, the force of the mighty river could destroy the earth. Bhagiratha then performed penances to seek the aid of the powerful Hindu god Shiva, who responded by catching Ganga in his densely matted locks of hair to break her fall.

In this intensely lyrical painting from Bundelkhand in Central India, the great river is shown tumbling from the night sky. Ascetics sit cross-legged on the mountainside, offering their austerities to Shiva, while women come to venerate Ganga. The river teems with life—crocodiles, turtles, fish, and birds—while lions, leopards, jackals, monkeys, and rabbits cavort on its banks. It is as if Ganga has restored life to the entire world.

Exhibited in "Divine Encounters, Earthly Pleasures: Twenty Centuries of Indian Art," 12/12/03-2/22/04.