

1

Tovil Mask

Case Location: C.4.A

Are these masks still used and made today?



“ *There is an irony that the only reason that Sri Lankan mask culture survives to this day is to satisfy the commercial interests of largely Western tourists, the same cultures that previously attempted to eliminate mask culture as ‘degenerate’ and ‘savage’. This is the very definition of neo-colonialism, with the cultural and economic status of a previously colonial nation remaining defined by the West.* **”**

*Hari Bravery,
Oxford University student and Pitt Rivers Micro Intern.*

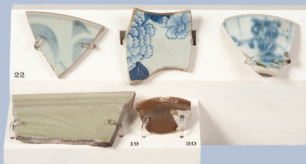
Can you spot where there is a fragment missing? As you sketch or photograph this mask consider how the shape of the missing fragments resembles other shapes that are also present as part of the design. Do you think this is a purposeful design decision?

3

Pottery Shards

Case Location: C.132.A

How did Chinese porcelain end up in Tanzania possibly over 500 years ago?



“ *We used to see these...bits of pottery...on the beaches. And sometimes older people would say to us, ‘That’s Chinese pottery’, and we’d think, ‘Yeah, yeah’ - we’d heard lots of stories...It was only later on, when you...hear these persistent stories of great Chinese armadas [fleets of ships] that visited East Africa, that the object then becomes...something important - a connection - this presence over centuries of a culture as far away as China.* **”**

*Abdulrazak Gurnah,
Tanzanian novelist and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2021.*

There is a contrast between the sharp edges of these broken ceramics and the fluid Chinese brush painting techniques used as decoration. Why not emphasise this contrast in how you portray these fragments.

2

Fragment of a Face

Case Location: C.148.4

How did a fragment of archaeology from Oaxaca in South Mexico get to the Pitt Rivers museum?



“ *Like many objects here, this object was purchased in the 1920s by a member of the British Civil Service, in this case the Consul [British representative] of Mexico. It is from either the Mixtec or Zapotec cultures. Other heads similar to this one have been found at the site of Monte Alban, an archaeological site from pre Columbian times. Mixtec and Zapotec cultures still live in that region today.* **”**

*Ashley Coutu,
archaeologist.*

How do you think Mixtec and Zapotec peoples feel knowing their ancestral objects are here in Oxford? Try to capture the soft, crumbling, textural surface of this object. You might find that a blunt pencil will help you achieve this visual effect. Pay attention to the broken edges.

4

Balanganda

Case Location: C.30.A

Look closely at the object. How do these balangandas, which were worn at the waist by women of African or mixed African heritages in Brazil, connect to the idea of fragments being brought together?

What might it mean when someone chooses to wear charm symbols from multiple different religions connected to different parts of their heritage?

There is an incredible level of detail on every single part of this object, making it a thing of beauty. Choose one part and try to capture as much detail as you can. Ensure that your pencil has a fine tip or that you zoom in closely to record a high level of detail.

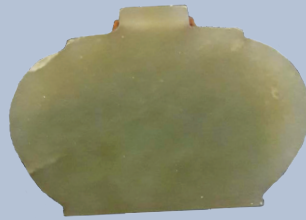


5

Ta'wiz/Baisut (amulet)

Case Location: C.30.1

What were these objects used for?



“Some of these types of talismans, charms, and amulets from Bengal in India can be seen as creative solutions to health problems in 19th century Bengal. Some contained mathematical symbols and calculations based on an understanding of planets and their movements, while others had medicinal herbs tied in them.”

Ananya Sharma,
Community Connector.

This single charm object has a smooth, watery, reflective surface. It is a combination of opaque and transparent. How would you present this in your drawing or photograph?

7

Children's Shoes

Case Location: U.67.A

Where were these children's shoes found and how are they so well-preserved?



“These shoes date from 200 BCE - 1550 CE and came either from the cemetery at Arica in Chile or the Acropolis at Ancón, in Peru. Due to the dry climate and high altitude, human remains and objects in these tombs, or huacas, were mummified.”

Ashley Coutu,
archaeologist.

The shape of these tiny objects are simplistic and fragmented. There may be a great deal of emotion attached to them as we think about the wearer, how would you portray them? There is text written on the surface to catalogue them, what other information might you add?

6

Nubian Faience beads

Case Location: U.64.A

How do these Nubian beads tell a different version of history? Often, we learn histories where ancient Egypt is presented as the most sophisticated and advanced civilisation, exporting objects to cultures all around it. These faience beads teach us something different. Unearthed as part of an excavation of the Nubian Amun Temple at Sanam in Sudan, they show that trade went both ways between ancient Egyptian and Nubian kingdoms. Faience beads such as these were exported from Nubia to Egypt as prized items.



“I could never know a fraction of the stories that can be told about Nubia.”

Hafsa Amberkab,
youth heritage activist and filmmaker.

Each one of these beads have been meticulously crafted so that they can be strung together to make this object. Try to show the subtle naturalistic colour and textural differences between them.

8

Nok head

Case Location: U.69.A

How are these terracotta heads part of the illegal antiquities [valuable objects] market in Europe? There is a sad history of international looting [stealing] of these figures - despite the fact that the Nigerian government has put into place laws protecting cultural artefacts. In 1998, the French government knowingly broke these laws in order to purchase Nok terracotta for their museum.



“Just as anyone who has lost property would want to recover it, the good people of Nigeria want to retrieve the illegally exported terracotta sculptures.”

Dr Musa Hambolu,
National Commission for Museums and Monuments,
Nigeria.

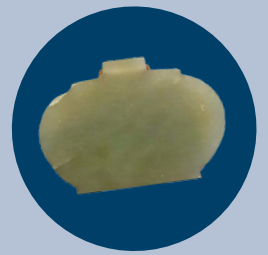
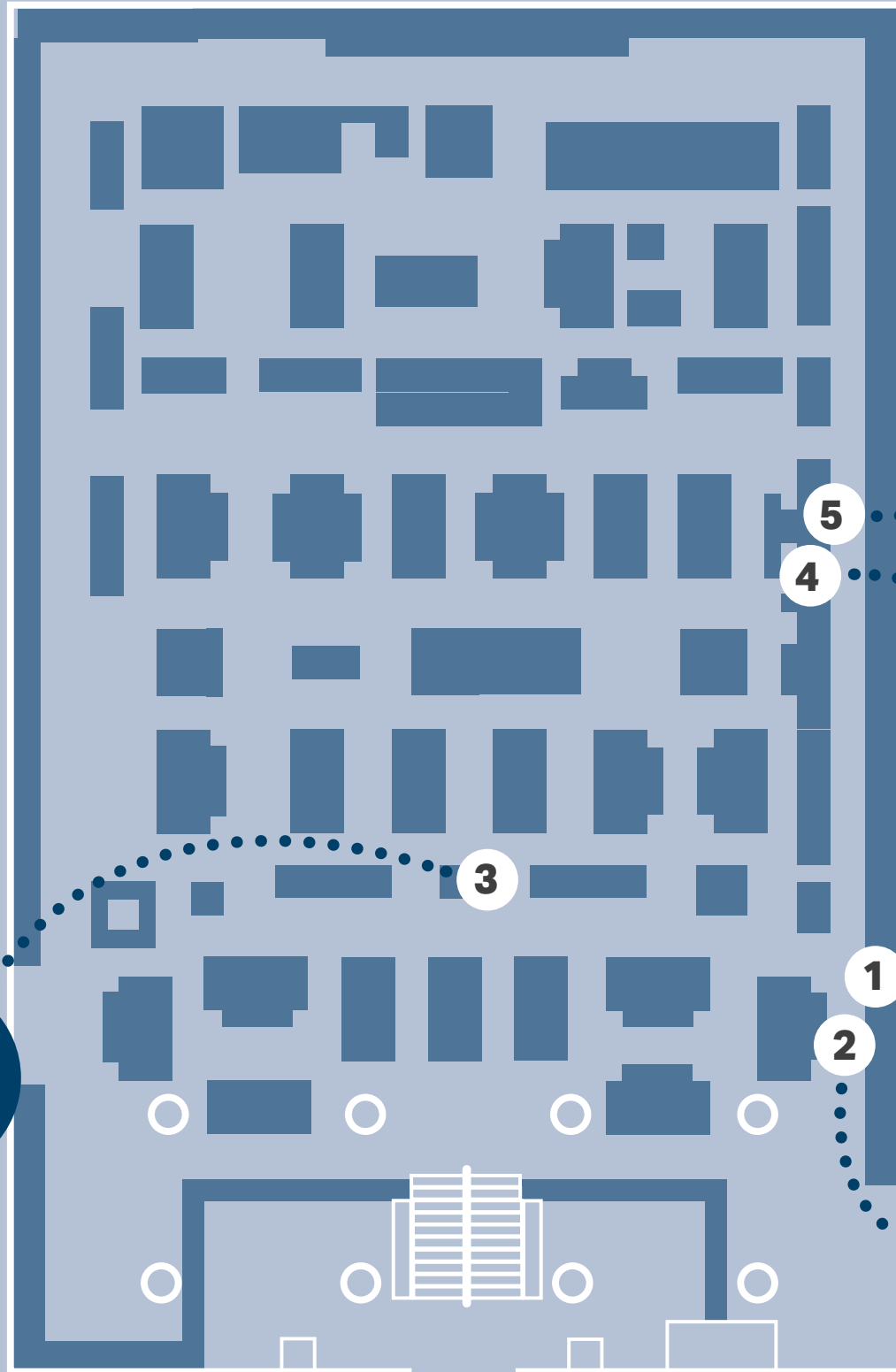
Recreate this terracotta head fragment using only shading techniques. Avoid creating outlines in a linear fashion. What sort of visual effects can you produce to show detail and a supposed authenticity?

Fragments

Self-guided Museum Trail



Ground floor



Fragments

Self-guided Museum Trail

Second floor

