

# Norton Simon Museum

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## Cultivating Empathy through Art

A self-guided tour through the Museum for teachers and their students



### *Buddha Shakyamuni*

c. 1100

India: Tamil Nadu

Granite

50 x 37 x 16 in. (127 x 94 x 40.6 cm)

The Norton Simon Foundation

LOCATION: Asian Sculpture Garden

**Mention in the Buddha's location that it is also visible from inside the lower galleries?**

### Background

Buddha Shakyamuni, seen here carved in granite, was born a prince but left the comfort and safety of his home to seek enlightenment. Here, he wears simple, translucent monk's robes, and his hair is cut short to show his renunciation of his princely life. His teachings, called the dharma, are the foundation of Buddhism, and they emphasize moderation, freedom from worldly attachments and compassion for all.

### A Closer Look...

In this sculpture, the Buddha sits in a meditation pose with his shoulders lowered and his hands resting in his lap, at peace. His eyes are partially closed, and he seems to shut out all the noise and distractions of the world around him to find peace within.

### Activity

- Take a moment to lower your shoulders, straighten your back and rest your arms like those of the Buddha, releasing any tension. Close your eyes and begin to slowly count your breaths. When you inhale count 1. When you exhale count 2. Inhale 3. Exhale 4, and so on. Continue counting until you reach 10. Then open your eyes and turn your attention to the artwork. Spend 5 minutes looking at this sculpture in silence. What are some words that you would use to describe it? What are some words that describe how you feel now when looking at this sculpture?



### ***Madonna and Child with Adoring Angel***

c. 1468

Sandro (Alessandro Filipepi) Botticelli

(Italian, c. 1444-1510)

Tempera on panel

35 x 26 3/4 in. (88.9 x 68 cm)

Norton Simon Art Foundation

LOCATION: Northeast Wing

### **Background**

Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli is known for the beauty and grace of his figures, which were heavily influenced by classical art and philosophy. He was particularly associated with humanism, a philosophy that emphasized the potential and value of people, and some of his most famous works celebrate the beauty of the figure as a bridge between classical mythology and Christianity. This interest led him to depict his subjects in a way that emphasized their humanity.

### **A Closer Look...**

Here, we see an affectionate moment between the Madonna, or Virgin Mary, and her young son, Jesus. He balances on his mother's lap, hugging her neck with his face turned upward and his cheek pressed against hers. The Madonna holds him tenderly, an expression of peace on her face, while an angel looks on with adoration. Behind them, a distant landscape is framed by a curved arch typical of Renaissance architecture. This arch defines the space and gives the scene a sense of depth and intimacy.

### **Discussion**

- Compare this painting of the Madonna and Child with Giovanni di Paolo's [Branchini Madonna](#). How do the two portrayals of the Madonna and Child differ? What effect do these changes have on the paintings and how we respond to them?

*Branchini Madonna*, 1427

Giovanni di Paolo (Italian, 1403-1482)

Tempera and gold leaf on panel

72 x 39 in. (182.9 x 99.1 cm)

The Norton Simon Foundation

LOCATION: Northeast Wing





***Camillus and the  
Schoolmaster of Falerii***

c. 1635-40

Nicolas Poussin

(French, 1594-1665)

Oil on canvas

39<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 54 in. (100.6 x 137.2 cm)

The Norton Simon Foundation

LOCATION: Northwest Wing

**Background**

This painting shows a scene from the story of the Roman general Marcus Furius Camillus's siege of the walled city of Falerii. During the siege, the town's schoolmaster led his students to the Roman camp, where he offered them to Camillus as hostages in hopes of ending the siege and earning the general's favor. But Camillus was appalled by the schoolmaster's treachery against his own people.

**A Closer Look...**

Here we see what happens next in the story: Camillus, sitting on a raised platform to the left and wearing red with a laurel wreath on his head, hands over the schoolmaster, stripped and bound, to his students and their parents for punishment. The story ends with the children's grateful parents making peace with Rome, and Camillus returning to Rome victorious.

**Activity**

- Choose a character in the painting (for example, Camillus, the schoolmaster or the students). Take their pose for a moment. How does it feel? Now compose a sentence from their perspective, starting with the phrase "I am..." and continuing on with "I feel..."



### **The Ragpicker**

c. 1865–70

Édouard Manet

(French, 1832–1883)

Oil on canvas

76¾ x 51½ in. (194.9 x 130.8 cm)

The Norton Simon Foundation

LOCATION: Southeast Wing

### **Background**

In 19th-century Paris, ragpickers collected rags to sell to paper manufacturers. Here, a pile of trash—which includes the top of a champagne bottle, a lemon peel and oyster shells (possibly the remnants of a wealthy Parisian's night out)—beside the ragpicker's right foot reminds the viewer of his work collecting other people's trash. In that trash, the people who first viewed this painting might have recognized themselves and their role in his livelihood.

### **A Closer Look...**

The painting's visible brushwork and near-life-size format made it controversial, as portraits this large were normally reserved for subjects of much higher social status. The large scale and flat, ambiguous background forced viewers to take notice of a man they might otherwise overlook on the street.

### **Discussion**

- How would you describe this man's posture and expression? What does it tell you about his life experiences and outlook?
- Can you think of someone you might pass every day without truly noticing them? How might you acknowledge them and their work?



### ***Women Ironing***

Began c. 1875–76; reworked c. 1882–86

Edgar Degas

(French, 1834–1917)

Oil on canvas

32¼ x 29¾ in. (81.9 x 75.5 cm)

Norton Simon Art Foundation

LOCATION: Southeast Wing

### **Background**

In 19th-century Paris, women ironers like the ones seen in this painting worked long hours for wages so low that they could barely cover basic living expenses. To make matters worse, the working conditions were miserable. Hot, humid air led to inflammation of the abdomen and throat, and diseases like bronchitis and tuberculosis were common.

### **A Closer Look...**

The tight crop of the composition, so close that it cuts off part of the arm of the woman on the left and limits our view of the room, gives the painting a claustrophobic feel. The edges of the forms are soft—blurred rather than crisp—and the paint has a roughness. The effect is a slight haze, as if the room is full of steam from the irons and we are seeing the scene through the exhausted laundresses' point of view.

### **Discussion**

- Imagine you are one of these laundresses writing a letter to your family at the end of the long workday. How would you describe the setting and how you are feeling? How might it feel to be depicted by a famous artist in this way?