

***The Object* Podcast** Self-Guided Tour

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Georgia O'Keeffe
The Black Place I, 1945
Gallery 301

Episode 38: Hiding in Plain Sight: The O'Keeffe We Never Knew

In the 1970s, Georgia O'Keeffe is supposedly the hermit savant of the New Mexico badlands, rarely heard and seldom seen, even as the outside world can't get enough of her enigmatic art. But when curators, journalists, and even the FBI come calling, it seems the head ghost of Ghost Ranch is the host with the most—and hardly ever alone. A fresh look at a myth we can't stop believing.



Joshua Johnson
Portrait of Richard John Cock, c. 1817
Gallery 304

Episode 43: The Possibly True Story of an American Legend

In 1798, a portrait artist named Joshua Johnson advertises himself as a "self-taught genius." A few decades later, he will nearly be forgotten. It's a mystery only now being revealed: the unlikely story of the man sometimes called America's first Black professional artist. A story of slavery and freedom, racism and redemption, nearly lost to history.



Edwin Landseer
The Cat's Paw, circa 1824
Gallery 305

Episode 42: Seeing Ourselves in Animals: An Unnatural History

As long as people have told stories, we have told stories about animals. Stories of slow turtles and fast rabbits, sly foxes and cunning monkeys, that are really stories about ourselves. But why? What can animals tell us about human nature? And what happens to our fellow creatures when we turn them—in art and literature and myth—into something they're not?

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Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson
Portrait of Mlle. Lange as Danae, 1799
Gallery 306

Episode 28: The Revenge of the Artist

Mademoiselle Lange is the first celebrity actress in France, as famous for her lovers as her looks. But when the French Revolution roils the country, she is forced to fight for her life, and meets her match in a rising artist who is commissioned to paint her portrait. A picture that will upend both their lives—and the art world—in dramatic fashion.



Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn
Lucretia, 1666
Gallery 311

Episode 12: The Case of the Missing Rembrandt

In 1666, Rembrandt painted a masterpiece that disappeared almost as soon as he finished it. Where it went, and what it meant to its various owners, is as fascinating as the question it begs: how can people be so tender and also so cruel?



John S. Bradstreet
Duluth Room, c. 1904
Gallery 320

Episode 3: The Fellowship of Good Things

There were wolves and caribou on the Minnesota frontier when John Scott Bradstreet arrived with his white suits and Far East fantasies of furniture, determined to elevate this outpost with fine interior design. A globalist mission on a collision course with history.



Cavaliere d'Arpino
The Archangel Michael, c. 1624-26
Gallery 330

Episode 33: A Christmas Conspiracy: The Family at the End of the World

It's good to be the pope in the 1600s. But staying pope is not so easy, as the famous Barberini family finds out when one of their own takes up the tiara in 1623. As Rome fills up with their art, and dungeons fill up with their enemies, can they survive the forces of change threatening their worldview—and the forces of the occult threatening to kill the pope on Christmas Day?

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Unknown artist
Nautilus shell cup, c. 1660–80
Gallery 350

Episode 20: Monsters and Marvels, Part I: The Magic Shell

From narwhals to nautilus shells, dragon eggs to mermaid hands, the obsession with oddities in the Age of Discovery may seem, well, odd. But did the study of outliers, in the early version of museums, help make us the rational creatures we are today?



Unknown artist
Two-piece cutlery set, late 1500s
Gallery 350

Episode 8: How to Stop an Assassin

Long ago, when everyone but your dog was a potential assassin, you needed to protect yourself by any means necessary. Starting with poison-proof silverware. A surprising story of art, myth, and the dangerous world that was.



Sir Alfred Gilbert
Kiss of Victory, 1878–81
Gallery 357

Episode 40: How to Live Forever (or Die Trying)

No one lives forever. But that hasn't stopped people from trying, and for a long time the noble way to avoid getting old and dying was to avoid getting old at all: the Greek notion of the "glorious death" that confers immortality in battle. It's an idea that resurfaces throughout history—until it meets its match in a war of many deaths and little glory.



Raffaello Monti
Veiled Lady, c. 1860
Gallery 357

Episode 25: The Secrets of the Veiled Lady

They are illusions, no more real than someone being sawed in half onstage. Yet the veiled ladies that Raffaello Monti sculpts in the 1800s are very real to him. Poignant symbols of an identity he's forced to conceal, even as they make him famous. A story of pride and prejudice and dreams just out of reach.

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William Edmondson
Ram, 1938-42
Gallery 367

Episode 13: Miracles in Stone: The Curious Celebrity of God's Sculptor

William Edmondson is a middle-aged laborer in Nashville, Tennessee, at the height of the Great Depression, when God tells him to carve a tombstone. Soon, he's the first African-American artist to have a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art. But his short-lived celebrity reveals the art world's problematic relationship with race.



Kehinde Wiley
Santos Dumont-The Father of Aviation II, 2009
Gallery 374

Episode 10: Flying Too Close to the Sun

Kehinde Wiley, long before he painted President Obama's official portrait, went to Brazil. There, he was inspired by a monument to the great aviator Alberto Santos-Dumont, whose incredible, tragic life is as forgotten in the United States as it is celebrated almost everywhere else.



Leonora Carrington
Dear Diary-Never Since We Left Prague, 1955
Gallery 376

Episode 41: Escape Velocity: The Woman Who Left the World

Leonora Carrington has never felt at home in her wealthy, conservative family. But when she meets the Surrealists in the 1930s, and runs from everything she knows, it will take everything she has to become the artist and writer she wants to be. Most importantly: her singular imagination, which reveals the world as both more magical and more haunted than most of us care to admit.



Hans Ledwinka; Manufacturer: Ringhoffer-Tatra-Werke AG
Tatra T87 four-door sedan, 1948 (designed 1936)
Gallery 379

Episode 9: The Car That Killed Nazis

When World War II began, nothing seemed capable of slowing the Nazis. Except a very fast, very unusual Czech automobile called the Tatra. A poignant story of poetic justice, grace in wartime, and the utopian future that wasn't.

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Unknown artist
Jade Mountain, 1790
Gallery 210

Episode 37: The Mountain That Came to Dinner

It's one of the largest jade sculptures in the world, a 640-pound mountain commissioned by the Chinese emperor. But in 1901, in the ugly aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, it ends up leaving China with an American diplomat—only to resurface on the dinner table of a lumber baron. It's a story of power and scandal, a story as old as stone: can anyone be king of the hill for long?



Unknown artist
Shiva Nataraja (Lord of the Dance), c. 1100
Gallery 211

Episode 7: Lord of the Dance: An Indian Icon Goes Global

In the 1920s, the sculptural image of Shiva Nataraja—the Hindu god Shiva as the cosmic dancer, ensuring the cycle of life—suddenly becomes a museum must-have. As India strives for independence, the image comes to symbolize something of the nascent nation itself.



Unknown artist
The Doryphoros (after Polykleitos), 27 BCE–68 CE
Gallery 241

Episode 11: The Truth About “White” Classical Art

He was the ideal man. Handsome, strapping, with unreal proportions. But ancient statues like the Doryphoros originally looked much different, a revelation that is slowly upending long-held assumptions about race and art in the classical world. And not a moment too soon to confront the dangerous claims of white supremacists.



Unknown artist
Cartonnage of Lady Tashat, 945–712 BCE
Gallery 250

Episode 6: X-ray Man and the Great Mummy Mystery

An assistant curator decides to x-ray a 3,000-year-old mummy case, to learn if anything's in there, and sees more than he bargained for. The international mystery would change his life—and the fate of the mummy.