

Educator Guide
BETWEEN EAST AND WEST
Folk Art Treasures of Romania

August 1, 2010 – April 3, 2011



EXHIBITION INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN EAST AND WEST– Folk Art Treasures of Romania showcases the rich and diverse artistic expression of this ancient territory.

The richness of Romania’s related arts — costumes, textiles, architecture, works in wood, pottery and other objects of daily and ceremonial use — derives energy from the confluence of East and West. Although its present day borders were drawn during the twentieth century, the region has been inhabited by many great civilizations, among them the Roman, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Romanians, Hungarians, Saxon Germans, Armenians, Jews and Roma are all part of the rich cultural heritage of this land, adding variety and dimension to the art found there.

This diverse exhibition features wooden chests and benches embellished with paint; pottery in fanciful forms for various uses; magnificent hand-embroidered costumes and textiles, New Year’s festival masks intended to frighten and delight, and colorful icons painted on glass. Also included are a number of full costumes representing a variety of regions, and a village room furnished in the style of Transylvania’s Maramures region.

GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTION



Romania is located in central southeastern Europe, bordering the Black Sea, between Bulgaria and Ukraine. Romania covers an area of about 240,000 square kilometers (slightly smaller than the state of Oregon), encompassing the Danube Delta and the arch of the Carpathian Mountains. Romania is a Federal Republic that comprises 41 administrative counties with a population of 21,400,000 people. The Romanian landscape is composed of hills, plains and mountainous terrain, with around 45 % of the population living in rural areas.

The population of Romania includes Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, Saxon German, Ukrainians, Armenians, Jews, Russians and Turkish groups.

EXHIBITION THEMES

East Meets West

In Romania east and west not only meet, they connect. The Romanian territory has been home to a throng of different cultures, many of which still inhabit the area and whose influences can be seen throughout the region.

Village Arts (Folk Art)

Objects created by the necessities of everyday life: housing, clothing and food preparation. In many cases, these objects are signifiers of seasonal and religious events, produced in with natural materials such as wood, wool, cloth and clay.

Regional Traditions and Style

The bright colors and ornate motifs found on Romanian costumes, textiles, furniture and ceramics vary from region to region. Each region has its own traditional styles, as dictated by the history of the region, accessible materials and aesthetic appeal.

Festivals, Music and Play

Folk Art objects are often created to celebrate seasonal and religious events, and lively celebrations vary from region to region. Folk art, music and dance are necessary elements for summoning protection, expressing religious worship and celebrating the season.

VOCABULARY AND KEY HISTORICAL FIGURES

Ceramics – items that are made from clay or similar material, often hardened by firing at a high temperature.

Dowry –the money, goods or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage.

Embroidery – the art or handcraft of decorating and stitching fabric or other materials with needle and thread or yarn. Hand embroidery is characterized by stitching techniques such as the chain stitch, buttonhole or blanket stitch, running stitch, satin stitch or cross stitch.

Icon – religious works of art, most commonly paintings, from Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism that represent persons and events of great significance.

Kilim – a flat tapestry-woven carpet or rug brought to Romania through Turkish influence.

Paganism – pre-Christian religious traditions.

Pattern – an artistic or decorative design, often repeated.

Powder Flask – container for carrying gunpowder, often made from a hollow animal horn.

Ritual – a set of actions, either religious or secular, that are performed for symbolic value.

Roma – ethnic group that lives primarily in Southern and Eastern Europe, commonly referred to as gypsies.

Show Room – the formal room in a Romanian household, used as a decorative space, often to display dowry items and other prized possessions.

Winter Solstice – the shortest day and longest night of the year, after which days get longer; calls for celebration of rebirth in Romanian folk tradition as the peasants anticipate the coming of spring.

Queen Marie of Romania - the grand-daughter of Queen Victoria who married Crown Prince Ferdinand and ascended the Romanian throne in 1922; Queen Marie embraced the folk art and architecture of Romania and became a lifelong promoter of folk culture.

MATERIALS

Wood

Gates, beams, ceilings and furniture are intricately carved and painted to incorporate symbolic motifs and proclaim the wealth of the owner.

Wool

The significance of sheep in Romania is profound – embroidered sheepskin vests, coats and woven rugs in Romania are among the most outstanding examples of folk art found in Europe.

Cloth





The folk costumes of Romania manifest the highest level of craft, showcasing the color, style, materials and embroidery used to create regionally distinct festival attire.

Clay

Romanian folk pottery includes functional household objects, colorful wall plates and drinking jugs that are diverse in style, form and color.



ROMANIAN FOLK ART SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

Name	Meaning	Symbol
Floral and vegetal motifs	represents the importance of agriculture in Romanian life; emblematic of the local abundance of plants and the rich vegetation of the country	
Goat (Capra)	an ancient symbol of fertility and fecundity; common in pagan Romanian folklore, stems from the zodiac sign Capricorn	
Rooster	first to announce the dawn of a new day, it is the universal symbol of the rising sun, and of renewal, resurrection and redemption	
Tree of Life	illustrates that all things, people and animals on earth are related; also found in the form of a grapevine in Romanian folk art	

TIMELINE

15 BC	The Roman Empire expands to include Dacia, later re-named Romania.
200AD-1700 AD	After the fall of the Roman Empire, various nomadic confederacies and empires take control of Romanian territories, including the Gothic Empire (Oium), the Hunnish Empire, the Avar Empire the Slavs, Magyars, Pechenegs, Cumans and Tatars.
1600	The three principalities—Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia—are first united under Mihai Vitaezul.
1700- 1800	Transylvania becomes a territory of the Habsburgs' Austrian empire. Wallachia and Moldavia fall to the control of the Ottoman Empire. During these conquests of Romanian territory, the Romanian people preserve their personal patriotism, despite being treated as second-class citizens.
1877	The Russians defeat the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Turkish War; the Treaty of Berlin recognizes Romania as an independent state and King Carol I is crowned.
1940	Romanian territories are lost to Soviet Union invasion. Romania fights on the side of the Axis Powers and recovers land. After the war, Romania regains Transylvania, the Romanian People's Republic is proclaimed, forcing King Michael to abdicate the throne.
1965- 1989	Nicolae Ceausescu becomes Romanian Communist Party leader – after more than 20 years, an uprising against the communist regime ends Ceausescu's rule of Romania.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- **What is folk art? Why is it produced? What makes folk art different from other forms of art you may have seen?**
- **What can art objects reveal about a region's history, culture and traditions?**
- **What is the value of preserving cultural traditions?**
- **What is a symbol? How can you interpret symbols found in various cultures? What kinds of symbols do we have in our own culture?**
- **How does the natural environment influence folk art?**
- **Why is it important to celebrate holidays and festivals? What is the role of music, art and dance in celebration?**

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

Romanian-style Decorative Plate

After a brief introduction to **BETWEEN EAST AND WEST – Folk Art Treasures of Romania** discuss with students the meaning and significance of a symbol or motif.

- Begin the activity by introducing the idea of a symbol. Explain that a symbol is an image that represents something else.
- Introduce the symbol of the rooster, which is a common symbol depicted on ceramic plates from Horezu, a small town in Romania. Horezu is known for its creation of beautiful plates and bowls which are decorated with solar wheels, spirals zigzags and roosters. The rooster proclaims the light of day and the departure of darkness. It is a powerful and magical symbol in folk art.
- Have students discuss symbols and what they represent. Ask: What are other examples of symbols that you remember from the exhibition? What do you think they might mean? Is the bald eagle a symbol here in America? What does that symbol mean?
- Show an image of a Romanian ceramic plate (below). Explain how plates can be decorated with floral, animal, vegetal or feathered designs.
- Have students create their own Romanian-style decorative plate with a rooster.
- Materials:
 - o Photocopies of rooster, available at:
<http://4crazykings.blogspot.com/2009/11/multi-cultural-kids-craft-romanian.html>
 - o Paper plates 10 5/8" in diameter
 - o Crayons
 - o Tempera paints
 - o Pencils with erasers
- Begin by drawing a circle around the rooster template, the same size as the inside of the paper plate, then cut out the circle with the rooster in the middle.
- Glue the rooster template inside the bottom of a paper plate.
- Use crayons to color the rooster and decorate the entire plate with various designs of your choosing, including the border. Simple designs can be made by combining lines and shapes, more elaborate designs can be floral or geometric.
- Once the plate is colored in, dab the eraser-end of a pencil in a paint color of your choosing and gently stamp a circle of paint onto your design, just like they do in Horezu!



Romanian plate



Student-inspired Romanian plate

IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR VISIT:

- Mingei International Museum offers:
 - **Free Admission** for all K-12th grade students when a tour is booked in advance.
 - **Complimentary Docent-Lead Tours** available in both English and Spanish.
 - **Transportation Funding** for Title 1 schools.

- Schedule a Museum visit and Docent-led tour through the Education Department
 - Email: ec-asst@mingei.org
 - Call: 619-239-0003 ext. 135
 - For more information, visit the Museum's website at: www.mingei.org/education

- Discuss Museum etiquette:
 - Not touching the art protects it from damage and wear; refrain from touching objects in the Museum. A Museum Docent will point out any objects that may be touched.
 - Running and roughhousing in the Museum is both dangerous and distracting to others – instead, walk quietly, talk softly and listen carefully to the interesting information your Docent will share with you.
 - All food and drinks must be left at the front desk prior to entering the galleries.

- Explain to students that a Museum Docent will guide them through the exhibition. Explain that a Docent is a knowledgeable Museum-trained volunteer who will share valuable information with them.

- Explain that Mingei International is a Museum of folk art, craft and design that displays work from all over the world, and that “Mingei” is a Japanese word that means “art of the people.”

- Use the Museum's mission statement to encourage understanding:

Mingei International Museum is dedicated to the understanding and appreciation of 'art of the people' (mingei) from all cultures of the world; this art shares a direct simplicity and reflects a joy in making, by hand, useful objects of timeless beauty that are satisfying to the human spirit. The Museum collects, conserves and exhibits these arts of daily life — by unknown craftsmen of ancient times; from traditional cultures of past and present; and by historical and contemporary designers.



POST-VISIT ACTIVITY:

Reverse-“painted” glass

Following your visit to Mingei International Museum and overview of **BETWEEN EAST AND WEST – Folk Art Treasures of Romania**, have students discuss their experience and opinions of the exhibition. Ask: What kind of objects do you remember seeing? What materials were used? What did you like? What was surprising? What did you learn about Romanian culture from viewing this exhibition?

Review the reverse-painted glass icons seen in the exhibition. Ask: What did they look like? What images or scenes did they depict? Did they look realistic? What do you think an icon is? What do you think they are used for? How do you think they were made?

Discuss the meaning and significance of an icon, and explain the process of creating a reverse-painted glass icon: Reverse-painted glass is the art of painting on a pane of glass and displaying the piece to be viewed from the unpainted side. Unlike stained glass, where completed pieces are meant to have light shine through them, reverse-painted glass are intended to be mounted on a wall with light shown on them. In Romania, this practice is most commonly used to depict religious icons, including scenes from the lives of Jesus or Mary, as well as the patron saints most meaningful in the home in which they are displayed.

Reverse-painted glass is a demanding process in which colors must be separated into layers and details must be painted in reverse order on the glass. In the case of a portrait, the small pupil of the eye is painted first, followed by the white of the eye, and so on, with the final layer being the background. In turn, depictions are usually simple in nature, as detailed images require practice, skill and patience. Many reverse-glass paintings are accented by gold leaf in order to create a sacred feeling or to emphasize the holiness of certain individuals.

Ask: What makes a reverse glass painting different from a regular painting? What is the purpose of displaying a painting from the opposite side?

Have students create their own reverse-“painted” glass.

- Materials:
 - Black and colored Sharpies
 - Transparency/Overhead sheets
 - Various images to trace
- Have students choose an image that they will recreate; images should be simple and easily depicted with lines. Images should be the same size as the transparency paper.
- Lay a transparency sheet over the image and tape both sheets down to a flat surface.
- Begin by using a black Sharpie to draw the main outlines of the image. Keep the lines as simple and clear as possible.
- Take the transparency sheet and *flip over* to other side – students will color in their drawing with the colored Sharpies on the other side of transparency sheet. Coloring on the opposite side will prevent the black outlines from smudging. Areas can be left clear if students wish to use white (place a blank sheet of paper behind image when completed). Gold Sharpies can be used to imitate gold leaf and highlight certain areas.
- When colored in, make a simple frame using four strips of black paper to make a border around the image and hang on a wall.
- Optional: paint markers, small picture frames, acrylic paint



Romanian reverse-painted glass



Student-inspired Romanian reverse-“painted” glass

EXTENSIONS – *Easily modified for multiple grade levels*

Language Arts – Study the unique poetry and folk art produced by Ion Stan Patras at the Merry Cemetery in the town of Sapanta in Maramures. Discuss the relationship between visual art and literature, how do they benefit and inspire one another? How does Ion Stan Patras use this medium as a way to remember those who have passed away in a vibrant and playful way while promoting the idea of a peaceful transition from life to death? Have students create their own grave markers for someone who has passed away, use both poetry and visual art to describe and celebrate a loved one’s life.

Science – Investigate how silk is produced. Research the development of the silkworm, process of cultivation and the various types of species and silk created in different parts of the world.

Social Studies – Study in-depth the history of Romania, including its geographical position in between Europe and Asia, the multiple empires that have occupied the country and its short- and long-term effects. Research the various ethnic groups and the various physical environments across the country. Why is Mingei’s exhibition titled ***Between East and West?*** Why is the melding of cultures an omnipotent notion in today’s society? In what ways are students’ influenced by multiple cultures? Discover the folk art of another region of the world. How is it similar to or different from Romanian folk art?

Math – Discuss designs, patterns and symmetry found on the diverse festivals costumes in Romania. Discuss how an embroidery pattern is created, and implemented. Invite students to create their own embroidery designs and patterns using graph paper.

Music – Study and share traditional music and instruments of Romania. What materials are some of the instruments made from? What are the instruments used for? (ie, festivals, shepherd-herding, etc)? Are any of these instruments still used today?

Theater – Read the Romanian folk epic *Miorita (Little Ewe)*, a ballad about the relationship of Romanians with sheep, nature and the world. Create or write an abridged theatrical adaptation inspired by the imagery and poetics to perform for an audience.

Dance – Explore and learn various styles of traditional Romanian dance and their significance in festivals throughout the year.

CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARDS

Kindergarten – Grade 2

Discuss the various materials in the exhibition. What are they made of (cloth, wood, clay, etc)? What are their physical properties (color, size, shape, texture)? Have students describe the materials as a class. Write the general categories (cloth, wood, clay, etc) on the board and have student's group objects they remember from the exhibition. (**Science:** K 1a, 3c, 4a-b; **English Language Arts:** K 1.18; **Visual Arts:** K 1.2, 3.3, 5.4)

Explore the various instruments in the exhibition. How are they similar to or different from instruments they have already seen? What are these instruments used for (for example, alpenhorn to call sheep, violin for festivals)? Discuss how a wind instrument works, specifically how sound is made by vibrating objects and how sound can be described by its pitch and volume. (**Science:** K 1g; **Visual Arts:** 1st grade 3.4, 4.2; 2nd grade 3.3)

Describe the patterns painted on the decorative eggs in terms of the elements of art and principles of design (line, shape, balance, rhythm, symmetry). Have students create their own patterns with simple geometric shapes and lines. (**Math:** K 1.2; **Visual Arts:** 1st grade 1.1, 1.3, 3.1; 2nd grade 2.5)

GRADES 3 – 5

Discuss how and why the items in the exhibition were created, emphasizing how one's natural environment heavily influences how things are made, what materials are used and why they are produced. Discuss various items in terms of the elements of art. (**History Social Science:** 5th grade 5.1.1; **Visual Arts:** 3rd grade 4.1; 4th grade 3.1; **English Language Arts:** 4th grade 1.1; 5th grade 1.1)

Explore the production and economy of wood products in Romania versus the United States or other parts of the world. (**History Social Science:** 3rd grade 3.5)

Explore the Winter Solstice Festival in Romania. What are the activities, costume and foods involved? What makes items such as clothing, masks and clappers significant in this festival? How do these items compare to the festivals and clothing of other regions students may have seen or studied? (**Visual Arts:** 3rd grade 3.4, 5.1)

GRADES 6 – 8

Compare Romanian folk art to folk art in another region of the world. How are they the same and how are they different? Compare and contrast their appearance, purpose and materials. What does this reveal about the group of people that made them? (**Visual Arts:** 6th grade 1.1-1.3, 3.1, 4.2, 8th grade 4.1)

Have students research in-depth a specific art form in the exhibition (ceramics, embroidery, costume, wood carving, etc) and their purpose and significance in various cultures. Write and/or present a multimedia report on their findings, comparing and contrasting one or more art forms in at least two different regions. (**English Language Arts:** 6th grade 2.6, 3.3; **Visual Arts:** 6th grade 3.1; 7th grade 3.2)

Research the origins of present day Romania, beginning from when the region was invaded by the Roman Empire. How has Romania's shifting borders and complex history affected its inhabitants, and the objects they have created? If Romania's history had been less complicated, how would the objects in this exhibition be different? (**History Social Science:** 7th grade 7.1; **Visual Arts:** 7th grade 3.2)

GRADES 9 – 12

Discuss icons, what they are used for, and how different cultures have represented them. How do Romanian icons compare to icons in other parts of Europe? Have students create their own reverse-painted glass icon. (**Visual Arts:** 9th-12th 4.1, 5.2, 2.5, 3.3)

Discover the life of Queen Marie of Romania. Why is she significant not only in Romanian history, but also the history of Europe during World War I? Imagine that you lived in Romania when Queen Marie married Prince Ferdinand. Write a section of her biography with information that you have learned about her life. What makes Queen Marie a fascinating historical figure? How did she help the promotion and visibility of Romanian folk art? (**English Language Arts:** 9th-12th 2.1)

WEB RESOURCES

Mingei International Museum – www.mingei.org

Maryhill Museum of Art – www.maryhillmuseum.org

Romanian festivals – <http://www.itsromania.com/traditions-festivals.html>

Romanian culture & crafts – <http://goeasteurope.about.com/od/romania/ss/romaniaculture.htm>

Traditional Handicrafts of Romania –
http://www.folkromania.com/cms/articles/traditional_handicrafts

Reverse-glass painting – <http://helium.com/items/641873-reverse-glass-painting-a-centuries-old-art-form>

Folk Costumes – http://www.folkromania.com/cms/articles/traditional_customs/folk_costumes

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