



Museums are special places. They can take many forms, and one of the most common is as a space to hold and display works of art. The New Mexico Museum of Art is a state museum, which means it belongs to everyone who lives in New Mexico.

Museums are not the only places that show works of art. Many people collect artwork and objects to display in their homes. From handmade coffee mugs, to children's drawings, to precious stones, to paintings and more, people tend to surround themselves with works that are pleasing to look at, or make them think in a new way, or that remind them of an important event or person. There is no one reason why people collect and appreciate art, but it is a very important part of life!

In this activity series, we will help you to pretend that your home is a museum! In the first activity, we showed you how to create display labels for the artwork in your home. Next, we covered how to curate your own exhibition with the objects in your collection. In this activity, we will go over how you can act as a guide, also known as a docent, and give tours to your family, pets, and more. In the final activity in this series, we have an easy craft to share with you that will allow you to make your own object display case.

# New Mexico Museum of Art

## What is a Docent?

At the New Mexico Museum of Art, we have a group of people who volunteer to give tours of the exhibitions and historic spaces at the Museum. Each Docent must go through training to not only learn about the artwork and history of the Museum, but also to develop presentation and discussion skills in order to be able to talk with people about the work on display. Docents must be able to encourage visitors' curiosity and observation skills, in addition to providing factual information.

Now that you've used the past activities in this series to create your own museum at home, try giving a tour of your exhibition(s). If you are nervous, try practicing on your pets or stuffed animals first. There is no one correct way to give a tour or talk about art, but here are some suggestions to get you started:

### Start with the basics:

- Look at one work of art at a time.
- What is the title? Who is the artist? What is it made of? The label text you created is a great place to start!



**Gustave Baumann**, *Cholla and Saguaro (Saguaro)*, 1928, color woodcut. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Museum purchase with funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952 (907.23G) ©New Mexico Museum of Art



Now let's try leading tours for live people! This can be in-person or via video chat. Some tips:

- Give your tour participants time to look at the work(s) you are discussing.
- If you are touring an entire exhibition, give an introduction to the theme of your exhibition.
- Don't feel like you have to do all the talking. Let your participants tell you what they see, and ask them questions to clarify, if needed.
- Think about interesting facts you think people on your tour would like to know:
  - How was it made?
  - Do you know the artist(s)?
  - Why is it special to you/your family?
  - What is the subject (person? place? object? event?), and is it important to you/your family?
  - How does this work relate to the other work(s) in your exhibition?

Once you feel comfortable with your tour, ask a friend or family member to make a video (or a bunch of short videos) of you leading a tour. This way you can share your exhibition and tour with family and friends who are far away. You can also share it with us at the Museum, if you would like!



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