

Kings, Wings...

Are you ready for a message from thousands of years ago and halfway across the globe from New York City?

We're off to the ancient Near East!

Did You Know?

You'd be surprised to learn how many things come from the ancient Near East. Cities and writing—to name just a couple—were first invented there more than 5,000 years ago!





...& Other

WE might think our modern lives are very different from those of people who lived in the ancient Near East. Can you tell what the ancient people were trying to tell us through the objects they made? Sometimes they aren't so different after all.

Let's head to the Ancient Near Eastern gallery. From this guide, figure out what the images

1 If the Hat Fits...

Start in the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery for Assyrian Art. This room is similar to one in the royal palace at Nimrud (in modern-day Iraq), built 3,000 years ago by the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal [a-shur-NAH-seer-pahl] II.

In the ancient Near East there were no newspapers, televisions, or Internet, but rulers still got their messages across as clearly as they do today. Let's explore this room to learn how the king gave all who entered important messages about his power, achievements, and beliefs.

Take a moment to look around this grand space. What you see on the walls are **reliefs** (raised images carved from stone) from the king's palace.

Can you find the figure shown in the picture above?

You might notice that his face looks the same as those of the other figures. But, to the ancient people who visited this palace, it would have been clear who he was because of the hat he wears. Look closely at his **hat**. He is the only one wearing one like this, which means he is King Ashurnasirpal himself. *What other clues might show that he is a king? Look at his muscles, the jewelry he wears, and the dagger, sword, and bow he carries. What do all these clues tell us about how he wants to be seen?*

2 What a Relief!

These walls tell a story. If you lived in the ancient Near East, you would know who the characters were (the king, his attendants, and visitors) and what they were doing (performing a ceremony for the gods), just as you would know about them in a book.

Did you notice that there are also lines of writing running across the top of the picture? This type of writing is called **cuneiform**. Like a title or a label, the writing doesn't explain what the figures are doing, but it can give us other information about the king—how he built his kingdom and how powerful a leader he was.

3 It's a Zoo in Here!

Just as they are to us today, animals were very important in the ancient Near East and are often found in their art. Frequently, people used animals to communicate certain messages. For example, a lion's features—strength, fierceness, and majesty.

Can you find the lions in this relief? (Hint: look closely at the animals.) Now can you find the figures that seem to be a combination of human and animal?

Of all the supernatural beings in this room, probably the most interesting are the creatures on either side of the doorway (they're on the cover of the book). They were the guardians of the palace, meant to protect it from evil spirits. Their features tell you something about their great supernatural powers.

Think of some of the superheroes you know. Which supernatural powers or other features borrowed from animals?

Things

are so unlike the lives of the people
n we really understand what they
ects they created? Perhaps our lives

art galleries and, with a little help
nages tell us.

Map on the
back!

ast, you would know
(winged figures) and what
st as if you were reading

g through the middle
Unlike in a comic book
are doing, but it does
his palace and what

Did You Know?

Cuneiform, the writing
system of the ancient Near East,
included over 600 different signs!

This one  means "palace."

t to the people of the
uently animals were used
might bring to mind

e decorations on the weapons.)
tion of human and animal?

most noticeable are the two
ver of this guide, too). These
n evil and impress visitors.
rnatural and physical powers.

erheroes have wings



Activity

4 Build Your Own Superhero

What animal(s) would you choose
to create your own superhero or a supernatural
guardian for your home? Draw it here:



Activity

5 A-Hunting We Will Go



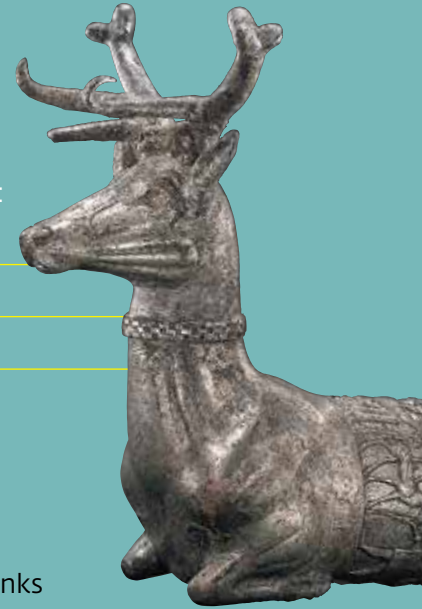
Did You Know?

The people of the ancient Near East were the first to domesticate (or, tame to live with humans) animals, from dogs to sheep, goats, and horses.

The king invites you to join him in one of his favorite activities: A royal hunt! In the galleries on either side of this palace room, you will find many different animals shown in the works of art. Which of these can you find?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bull | <input type="checkbox"/> Deer | <input type="checkbox"/> Ibex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cow | <input type="checkbox"/> Boar | <input type="checkbox"/> Goat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lion | <input type="checkbox"/> Horse | <input type="checkbox"/> Ram |

Did you find any other animals on your hunt? List them here:



Time for *one more idea...*

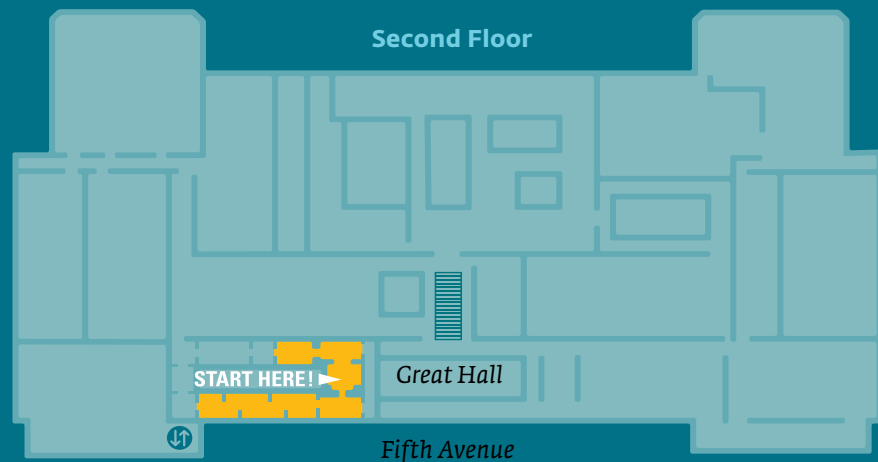
It's possible you spent about an hour in these galleries. Thanks to the people of the ancient Near East, who were the first to use the number sixty to measure time, our hour has sixty minutes and our minute has sixty seconds! Tick, tick, tick.

How to get there:

You'll find the galleries for Ancient Near Eastern art on the second floor. Take the Great Hall Stairs or the elevators from the Uris Center for Education. The galleries are highlighted on the map.

Keep in mind:

Sometimes we have to move works of art or even close galleries to renovate them or prepare for exhibitions. When in doubt, ask a guard for help!



Education

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
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On the cover: *Human-Headed Winged Bull and Lion*, Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 b.c.; Mesopotamia, excavated at Kalhu (modern Nimrud); gypsum alabaster; H. 122 1/2 in.; Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.1, 2)

Above: *Dog Pendant*, Late Uruk or Jemdet Nasr period, 3300–2900 b.c.; Mesopotamia, Iran; gold;

H. 5/8 in.; Purchase, Vaughn Foundation Fund Gift, in honor of Valor, 1995 (1995.329)

Vessel Terminating in the Forepart of a Stag, Hittite Empire period, ca. 1320–1200 b.c.; Anatolia; silver, gold inlay; H. 7 1/8 in.; Gift of Norbert Schimmel Trust, 1989 (1989.281.10)

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