PHILADELPHIA, UNITED STATES

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Masterpieces

Twenty works from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, from Campin and Bronzino to Duchamp, Miró and Pollock.



The Philadelphia Museum of Art is one of the largest art museums in the United States. European and American painting is only part of it: the museum also has major holdings in many other fields. The twenty works chosen here run from Campin's Christ and Virgin set against gold and El Greco's Pietà to Kupka, Miró and Pollock. Along the way come Turner's burning Houses of Parliament and Toulouse-Lautrec's dance floor at the Moulin Rouge.

Several of them do not give quite what their titles or subjects lead one to expect. Rousseau's carnival has no crowd, Duchamp's bride and bachelors turn out to be machinery, and Magritte's elements make an unlikely assortment. Elsewhere the subject is plain and the treatment is the surprise, as when Bronzino presents a Medici ruler as a nude Orpheus.

Two artists appear twice, and each pair is worth seeing together. Eakins is represented by a surgeon teaching before an audience and by a sculptor at work in his studio. Duchamp is represented by a construction on glass and by a length of twine held by metal plates and long screws.

Artline chose these works from the museum's documented holdings, and the selection is independent of the museum. Dates and attributions keep the qualifications recorded for each work.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/philadelphia-museum-art

The selection · 20

1. The Annunciation
   Henry Ossawa Tanner · 1898
2. The Gross Clinic
   Thomas Eakins · 1875
3. The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even
   Marcel Duchamp · 1915-1923
4. The Burning of the Houses of Parliament
   J. M. W. Turner · 1834–1835
5. Carnival Evening
   Henri Rousseau · 1885-1886
6. Dog Barking at the Moon
   Joan Miró · 1926
7. At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance
   Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec · 1890
8. Disks of Newton: Study for Fugue in Two Colours
   František Kupka · c. 1911
9. Male and Female
   Jackson Pollock · 1942
10. Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus
    Bronzino · c. 1538
11. Blessing Christ and Praying Virgin
    Robert Campin · 1424
12. With Hidden Noise
    Marcel Duchamp · 1916
13. Interior
    Edgar Degas · 1868-1869
14. Pietà
    El Greco · 1575
15. Violin and Newspaper
    Georges Braque · c. 1912
16. William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River
    Thomas Eakins · 1877
17. Pope Pius VII with Cardinal Caprara
    Jacques-Louis David · 1805
18. The Poet, or Half Past Three
    Marc Chagall · 1911-1912
19. Madonna with the Writing Child
    Pinturicchio · 1498
20. The Six Elements
    René Magritte · 1928

01 / 20

The Annunciation

Henry Ossawa Tanner

1898 · Oil · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Henry Ossawa Tanner. The Annunciation. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/henry-ossawa-tanner/the-annunciation-1898 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Tanner's Annunciation does without the angel, or at least without the familiar winged figure. A brilliant vertical light is the only sign of Gabriel's visit, and Mary, seated in a modest room, looks towards it. With no visitor in bodily form, everything depends on her. Her startled, attentive pose has to carry the story by itself.

Object source · Open artwork

02 / 20

The Gross Clinic

Thomas Eakins

1875 · Philadelphia Museum of Art and Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (joint ownership)



Thomas Eakins. The Gross Clinic. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

This is an operation and a lesson at the same time. The standing surgeon addresses the onlookers in the theatre while his assistants carry on with the physical work, so explanation and handiwork go on side by side. Eakins does not tidy any of it up. The medical knowledge on offer is made public through a patient's vulnerable body, and the blood is shown as plainly as the concentrated attention around it.

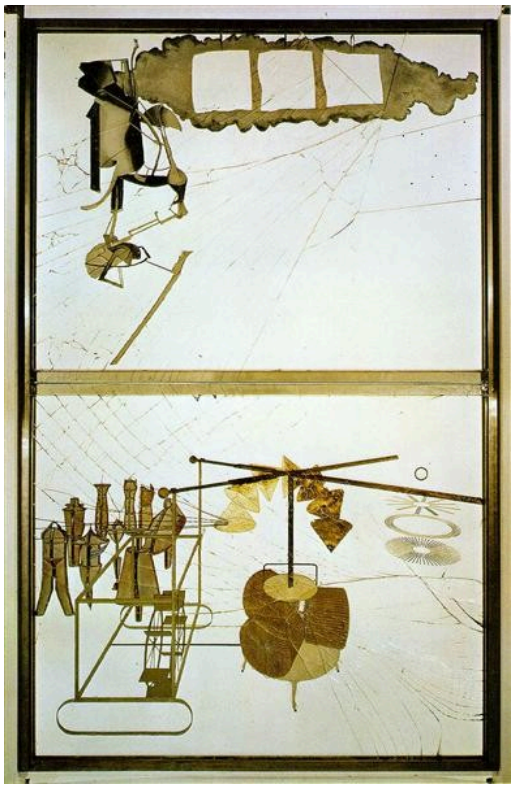
Object source · Open artwork

03 / 20

The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even

Marcel Duchamp

1915-1923 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Marcel Duchamp. The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Duchamp's mechanical forms are carried on transparent glass, so this is a work without a back wall. The room beyond shows through and becomes part of the image, visitors included, and the cracks remain part of the surface. The title promises a bride, her bachelors and something happening between them, which sounds like a scene with figures. What the glass carries instead is a set of mechanical forms, and they never settle into anything like an ordinary scene.

Object source · Open artwork

04 / 20

The Burning of the Houses of Parliament

J. M. W. Turner

1834–1835 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



J. M. W. Turner. The Burning of the Houses of Parliament. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The fire broke out on 16 October 1834. Turner paints it largely through what it does to everything around it: light thrown across the river, smoke spreading through the sky, the view of the buildings altered by the blaze. Crowds and boats show how many people watched it together. This was a disaster with an audience, and the picture seems as concerned with the spectacle as with the destruction.

Object source · Open artwork

05 / 20

Carnival Evening

Henri Rousseau

1885-1886 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Henri Rousseau. Carnival Evening. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

For a carnival, it is remarkably quiet. Rousseau places two pale figures in costume beneath bare trees and a moon, small against the darkness, and their clothes are the only sign of festivity. There is no crowd and no noise, and the landscape does little to confirm the occasion named in the title. If there is a party, it is out of sight.

Object source · Open artwork

06 / 20

Dog Barking at the Moon

Joan Miró

1926 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Joan Miró. Dog Barking at the Moon. Image: WikiArt. Copyright protected (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Copyright protected (WikiArt label)

Miró sets the dog and the crescent moon far apart on a dark ground and adds so little else that every gap counts. A long ladder seems to offer a way between them, though its scale makes the idea peculiar, and the moon is hardly an ordinary destination. Taken together with the title, the picture can seem both comic and a little forlorn.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 1952-61-82

07 / 20

At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

1890 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. At the Moulin Rouge, The Dance. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The dancers have only the patch of floor that the people around them leave free, so the crowd matters as much as the performance. Some figures perform, while others watch, talk or stand at the edge, and their attention is not necessarily fixed on the same thing. Bright clothing picks individuals out of the press.

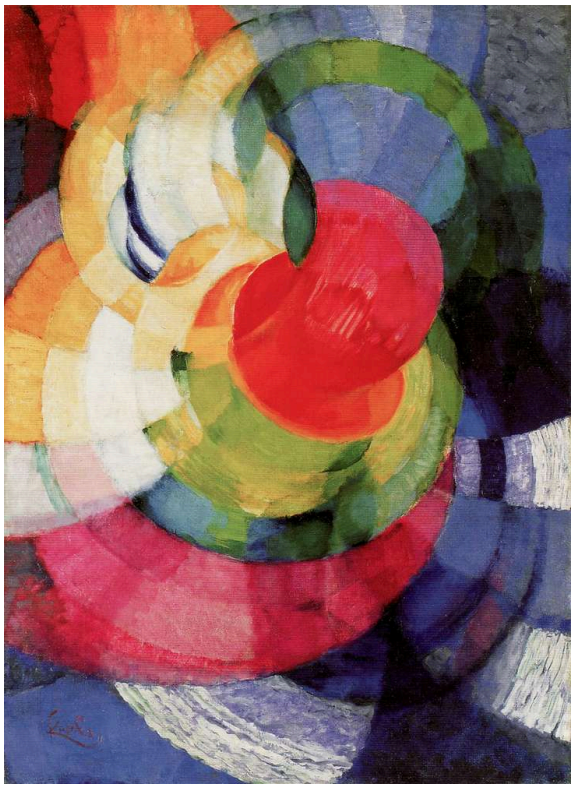
Object source · Open artwork

08 / 20

Disks of Newton: Study for Fugue in Two Colours

František Kupka

c. 1911 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



František Kupka. Disks of Newton, Study for Fugue in Two Colors. WikiArt source label: Public domain US. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/frantisek-kupka/disks-of-newton-study-for-fugue-in-two-colors · Public domain US (WikiArt source label)

These arcs belong to no machine and no body. They pass over and behind one another, and whatever movement the picture has comes from the sequence and repetition of colours and curved bands. The title looks two ways, to Newton and to music, and it calls the picture a study for a Fugue in Two Colours. A fugue is built from interweaving voices, which describes the overlapping bands well enough. But the comparison is only an analogy, and there is no score to follow.

Object source · Open artwork

09 / 20

Male and Female

Jackson Pollock

1942 · Oil on canvas · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Male and Female. WikiArt; Jackson Pollock. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Jackson Pollock

Numbers are not what one expects in a picture called Male and Female. Pollock puts them among loops and patches of colour around two upright forms that can still partly be read as figures, the couple the title asks for. He never fully separates those figures from the surrounding activity, and bodies and independent marks compete on equal terms.

Object source · Open artwork

10 / 20

Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus

Bronzino

c. 1538 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Bronzino. Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/agnolo-bronzino/portrait-of-cosimo-i-de-medici-as-orpheus · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Bronzino dispenses with court dress, and indeed with dress of any kind. Cosimo appears as Orpheus, the musician of Greek myth, with a stringed instrument, and his recognisable face is set on an idealised nude body. The face supplies the likeness. The body and the myth attach the ruler to a story that reaches well beyond his everyday appearance.

Object source · Open artwork

11 / 20

Blessing Christ and Praying Virgin

Robert Campin

1424 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Robert Campin. Blessing Christ and Praying Virgin. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Campin shows Christ and the Virgin close up against gold, leaving almost no room for a setting, so there is no episode to follow. Christ raises a hand in blessing, and the Virgin joins her hands in prayer. In these images the meaning lies in small differences of gaze and gesture between the two sacred figures.

Object source · Open artwork

12 / 20

With Hidden Noise

Marcel Duchamp

1916 · Ready-made · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Marcel Duchamp. With Hidden Noise. WikiArt source label: Public domain US. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/marcel-duchamp/with-hidden-noise-1916 · Public domain US (WikiArt source label)

Metal plates and long screws hold twine in a compact assembly. This is a ready-made, Duchamp's term for an existing object chosen and presented as art. The title points to what the eye cannot check: something hidden inside, and the sound linked to it. Examine the outside as closely as you like; it is under no obligation to tell you what is within.

Object source · Open artwork

13 / 20

Interior

Edgar Degas

1868-1869 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Edgar Degas. Interior (The Rape). Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

A man stands near the doorway while a woman bends over elsewhere in the dim room. Furniture and scattered objects widen the distance between their very different poses. It is hard not to start constructing a plot. Degas supplies enough detail to prompt one, but nothing that would settle it.

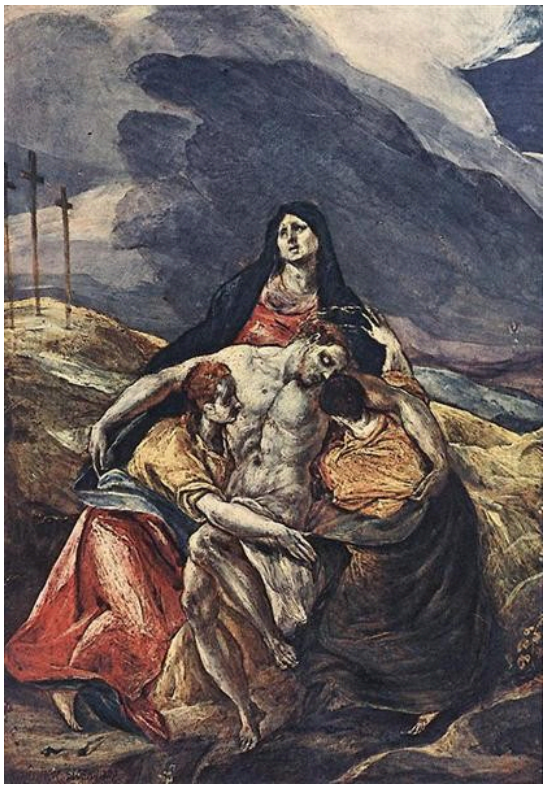
Object source · Open artwork

14 / 20

Pietà

El Greco

1575 · Tempera on panel · Philadelphia Museum of Art



El Greco; WikiArt; Public domain (WikiArt label). Source frame preserved; proportionally resized and JPEG compressed. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

As in any Pietà, Mary mourns over the dead Christ, but here she is also physically holding him up. The effort of supporting his pale body binds the angular group together. El Greco lengthens the limbs and sharpens the folds, so the grief never settles into a smooth, balanced display. Behind the figures, a broken landscape carries the unrest further.

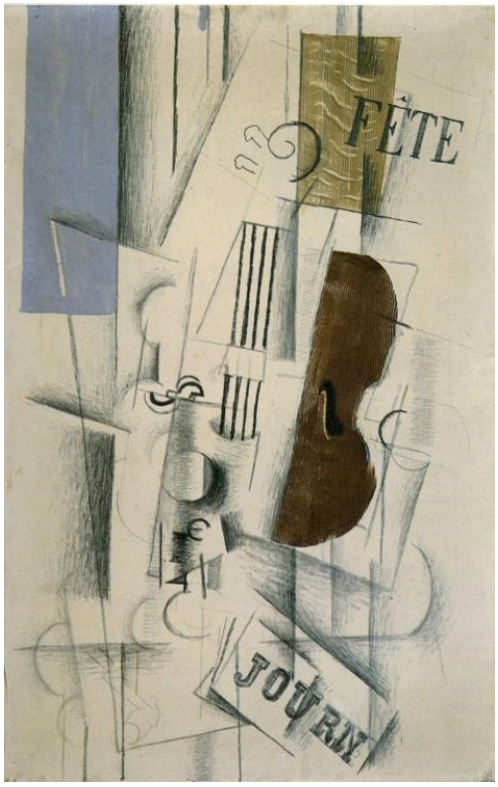
Object source · Open artwork

15 / 20

Violin and Newspaper

Georges Braque

c. 1912 · Charcoal and oil on canvas · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Georges Braque. Violin and Newspaper (Musical Forms). WikiArt source label: Public domain US. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/georges-braque/violin-and-newspaper-musical-forms · Public domain US (WikiArt source label)

A few curves are enough to suggest a violin, though its full outline never appears. Braque sets this partial instrument beside lettering, so reading goes on alongside looking, and the overlapping planes do not agree on a single viewpoint. The violin has to be pieced together from clues, much as the newspaper's letters build meaning out of separate marks. Even the medium is mixed: charcoal, a drawing material, is used together with oil on the canvas.

Object source · Open artwork

16 / 20

William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River

Thomas Eakins

1877 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Thomas Eakins. William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuykill River. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Eakins shows an allegory of the Schuylkill River before it has become one. The model poses, Rush carves, and the figure is only half-finished, so each stands at a different stage in the making of a public image. The clothes, the tools and a seated companion share the studio with them. The river takes on human form through labour and posing, and Eakins leaves the ordinary conditions of that work in view beside the idealised result.

Object source · Open artwork

17 / 20

Pope Pius VII with Cardinal Caprara

Jacques-Louis David

1805 · Oil on panel · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Pope Pius VII with the Cardinal Caprara. WikiArt; Jacques-Louis David. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Public domain

Putting a pope and a cardinal on one compact panel means showing rank at close quarters. David overlaps the two figures. Even so, their positions, their contrasting garments and the different turn of each face keep them distinct as individuals, and the hierarchy between them is never in doubt. Pale robes and red accents stand out from the dark setting.

Object source · Open artwork

18 / 20

The Poet, or Half Past Three

Marc Chagall

1911-1912 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Marc Chagall. The Poet, or Half Past Three. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The poet of the title has a green head, turned at an unusual angle, in a room whose furniture can still be recognised. Chagall runs bright geometric divisions through the setting and the body alike, so neither is stable. Yet the room stays ordinary enough for the body's departure from it to register. The alternative title, Half Past Three, names a time and explains nothing about the head.

Object source · Open artwork

19 / 20

Madonna with the Writing Child

Pinturicchio

1498 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



Pinturicchio. Madonna with Writing Child. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The child in Mary's embrace is writing, and that is the unusual thing here. The infant has a book, and writing gives the small hands something to do. Pinturicchio keeps this activity within the physical closeness of mother and child, with a landscape opening out beyond. The result is a very familiar composition changed in one respect: the child attends to learning as well as receiving care.

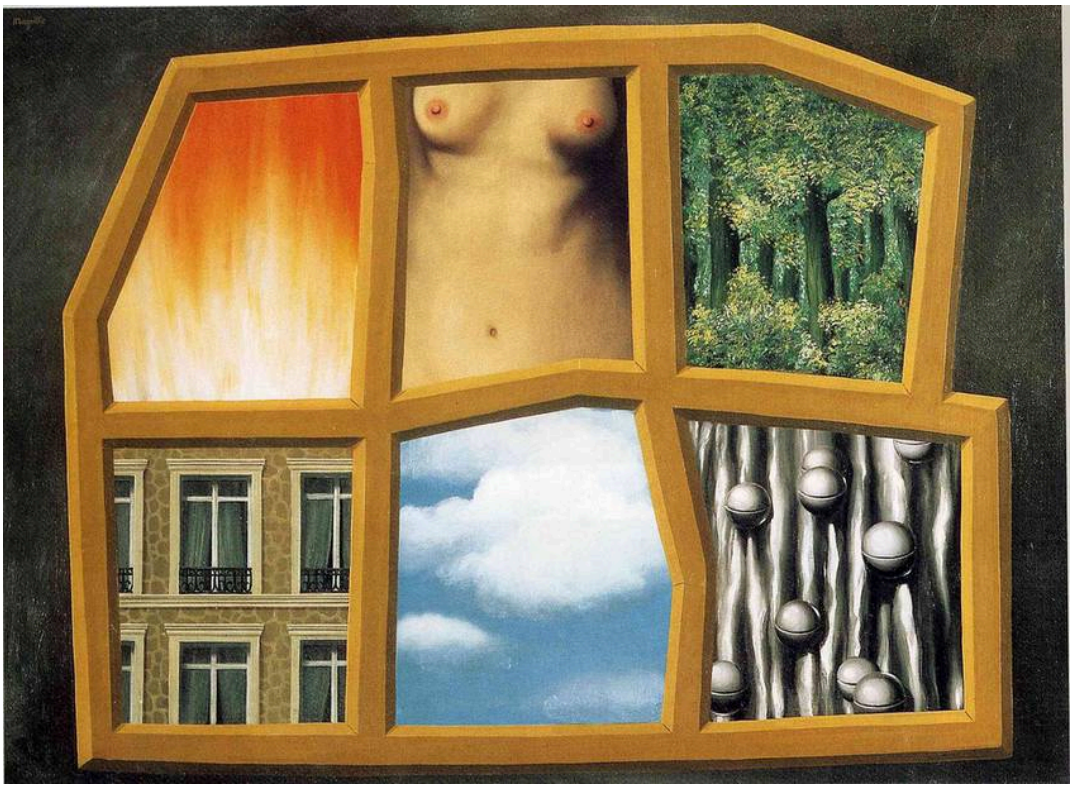
Object source · Open artwork

20 / 20

The Six Elements

René Magritte

1928 · Philadelphia Museum of Art



René Magritte. The six elements. WikiArt source label: Rene Magritte Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/rene-magritte/the-six-elements-1928 · Rene Magritte Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

The compartments promise an orderly classification, and the title promises elements. Fire answers to the word well enough. A torso and a landscape are harder to account for, and the other forms differ just as widely in scale and kind. No consistent rule decides what goes where, and the regular framework only makes the mismatch more obvious.

Object source · Open artwork

Eakins and Duchamp, in pairs

Neither Eakins picture shows a finished piece of work. In the clinic, knowledge is handed on during the operation itself, before an audience. In Rush's studio a public image is still being made, with the model, the tools and the half-carved figure all in the room. Both seem more interested in work under way than in its outcome. Duchamp's pair pull against each other. The glass takes in whatever and whoever is behind it, and in that respect it has something in common with the Rush picture, where the studio stays in view around the allegory. With Hidden Noise, by contrast, is closed: the title announces what it contains, but the object does not show it. That makes it an unlikely neighbour for Degas's Interior, which also keeps back what a viewer most wants to know, though what is missing there is a story, not an object.

Further reading

The Practice and Science of Drawing

Harold Speed · Read free · English

Harold Speed covers drawing and the arrangement of tone in plain, practical terms. That makes the book useful grounding for the pictures here that depend most on tone and drawing, among them Tanner's Annunciation, Degas's dim interior and both of the Eakins pictures. It has less to offer on the abstract and assembled works.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12
