

## Seeing an Exhibition for the First Time: A Strategy For Understanding

This exhibition on shadow puppets has been curated for you by one of our curators in training-grad student Josh Nowakowski. He had a process by which he decided how to introduce the public to these puppets.

Take some time to just be in the space and take in the whole idea before. Imagine you have all the time in the world. These puppets were made by hand by local craftspeople who experience the practice of making the puppets as a spiritual calling, creating something beautiful for the whole community.

What do you notice? What materials are used to construct the shadow puppets? What colors are used and why do you think they used these colors? What might be the reasons to use water buffalo hide? Imagine the time to render it from animal to puppet. What else do you see? Make a list of the many aspects of one of the flat leather shadow puppets. From craftsmanship to special materials and colors.

Now look at the wooden shadow puppets and make a similar list of materials.

How do these compare with the water puppets?

What, exactly, makes them beautiful or ugly?

## Performing Our Lives

2. Watch the 5 min video in the gallery. Notice how Kathy Foley carefully adjusts the character (god clown who swallows the world) to tell her story of travel to her presentation that day. She states all these characters exist within us:

- A. The refined- Arjuna (m) who follows societal expectations and lives on a high moral plane.
- B. More impulsive/less refined – Srikandi (f) moves faster and speaks without thinking, but often this personality impresses and misleads us. When they mess up it's epic.
- C. Strong personality - Hanoman (monkey) – these individuals solve problems and get to work.
- D. Demons/ogres- (not m/f) Ravana- emotionally unhinged source of chaos in society. They often stand in opposition to the righteous and battle with the jester/clown character.
- E. Clowns or Jesters (m/f)- can cause trouble but usually here to assist in human problems; serves righteousness- voice of oppressed- little people know a thing or two.

Think about your own personal life or the lives you observe around you. Think about how your public persona differs from your private life. Why is that? What performative qualities do you adopt when you are in public?- what ways do you try to communicate something about yourself to others?

1. Who is your audience? When you go to class? When you go to church? When you go to court? When you go to grocery store? When you go to a party? How do these aspects of yourself clash or mesh or interact or stay separate. Can you see any of these parts of you shift from context to context? What cues do you use to send out these messages to others?
2. Now imagine a storyline you might enact either as a standup comic or in a mini skit to illustrate this process of public vs. private personas