

A Letter to a Friend: “I met my MAN at the Metropolitan Museum of Art!”

Nadia Alomari

Dearest Kathy:

Greetings from New York! I can't wait to tell you about my adventure last night. But first off, let me tell you that the weather is definitely colder than I expected. Not something we are used to back home in Hawaii. Everyone is all bundled up in their winter gear and I was not properly prepared.

Luckily I packed one sweater and a pair of jogging shoes. This came in handy as I went for a morning jog in Central Park. I have to say this place had one of the most beautiful sceneries I've ever seen. The clouds looked crystal clear and the trees were a couple of leaves shy from being completely bare. I couldn't help but enjoy the crunching sounds my shoes made as I ran across piles and piles of leaves on the ground. But even after that high intensity run, I was still cold. It seemed like nothing could shield my sun kissed skin from the sudden gusts of wind that would creep up on me when I least expected it. Or maybe I was just super sensitive and my body was just longing for that warm beaming sun back home. Whatever the case may be, I just needed to find somewhere indoors where I could warm up for a while.

As I walked a few blocks over, I noticed this insanely large building. I instantly knew that I had to go inside. The sign on its facade read: “The Metropolitan Museum of Art.” This is where my adventure began. As I entered the building, I was overwhelmed with the size and magnitude of the museum. It was huge! The ceilings were the highest I've ever seen. I was surrounded by a distinguished collection of unique objects, but nothing caught my eye quite like this statue that was in the center of one Asian Art gallery.

Remember how I said I was hoping to meet someone here in NY? Well, I think I found the right guy! He's not really a guy, he's a statue, but that's not really important. The way he dominates the open space in the room is remarkable. It is as if he demanded the attention of anyone who walked in his path. Sort of like what I do when I enter a room. There was a brief text explaining this statue, placed near his body. It was as if we could tap into someone's Facebook profile and read a little background info about him. But, I was more intrigued with the realistic depiction of the overall image.

This particular statue is named *Fudo Myoo* by the sculptor Kaikei. Fudo Myoo is the guardian of Buddhism and the chief of the five wisdom kings. This *Fudo Myoo* is made from lacquered wood. His realistic body sits at the center of a flat rectangular base, the bottom part of which looks similar to the crisscross shape you get when playing Jenga. His facial features are strong, fierce and to some, even

scary. His bulging eyes are inlaid with crystal, which intensifies his ferocious expression. His eyebrows arch inwards formulating these aggressive lines on his forehead. The bite that he portrays is pretty intense. His teeth are exposed as he bites his lower lip, similar to the face a pit bull gives you right before he jumps in for the kill.

What I love most is the realistic lines on his hairline and the textured curves in his long hair. There is a bun on top of his head, similar to the *ushnisha*, the crown of hair that Buddha has on his head. The rest of his hair is combed to the left side of his face with a long narrow-looking ponytail. Kind of like the way the women used to wear their hair in the 1980s just without the volume. The realistic details on his body are incredible. The artist who created this statue was able to capture the naturalistic flow of the garment without the addition of unnecessary stylized lines. The garment hugs his body and flows down very realistically. The drapery in the bottom part of the garment also clearly shows his legs underneath that are crossed in a lotus position.

Both of his arms are similarly positioned to the sides of his body, but he is holding different objects in each hand. It is as if he is prepared to put anyone who crosses his path on guard. His left elbow is kept close to his torso while his forearm extends outward as he holds on to what seems to be a rope. It is very possible that he and I share the same hobby of swinging the rope and capturing objects. His opposite arm also extends outwards in order to hold this long narrowed pointy sword. I was completely intrigued by the amount of jewelry on his neck that dangled all the way to his midsection. It's similar to those signature necklaces I wear on the weekends to make my outfit pop.

I have to say I was completely won over by the depth of this statue. It was as if he could take out an army with just one facial expression. His confidence won me over. So make room for both of us when I return home tomorrow. I'm bringing him home to meet papa :)

See you soon and take care,

Nadia

Nominating Faculty: Professor Ikuyo Nakagawa, Art History 1108, Department of Humanities, School of Arts & Sciences, New York City College of Technology, CUNY.

Cite as: Alomari, N. (2016). A letter to a friend: "I met my MAN at the Metropolitan Museum of Art!" *City Tech Writer*, 11, 6-7. Online at <https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/city-tech-writer-sampler/>