Undressing the Nude

Each of these paintings/sculptures represents a larger theme, or idea, rather than "nudity." Can you guess the subject for each artwork? Draw a line to match the painting or sculpture to its theme.

1. A. Shame
2. B. Dance
3. C. Right over might
4. D. Spring


Paul Manship, Danae, 1920
William Adolphe Bouguereau, Return of Spring (Le Printemps), 1886
Auguste Rodin, Eve, 1881
Artist Unknown, David with the Head of Goliath, 1575-1642

(No need to be embarrassed!)
Begin your exploration of **Undressing the Nude**... Travel to the main level of the Memorial Building and look for Gallery 2. If you need help, a Museum officer will be happy to direct you!

**Recognizing Realistic and Abstract Human Forms**

A realistic representation of the human form reflects nature, or real life, and is easily recognizable. An abstraction of the human form suggests real life, but is less recognizable.

See if you can decipher which is which?

**The Perfect Proportion**

What makes a realistic painting or sculpture look so real? Proportion is a design principle that artists use to make objects look realistic. Find a painting of a person and see if the figure meets the requirements of perfect proportion.

- 8 head lengths high from tip of the skull to the toes.
- The elbow should align with the belly button.
- The wrist should align with the groin area.
- Where the body bends should be at half, or the bottom of the 4th head down.

Did the figure measure up?

**Why Nudity?**

Nudity in art has its origins as early as ancient Greece, when artists depicted males as idealized nudes to assert their health, strength, and grace. For the opposite gender, nudity was considered too scandalous. As a result, females remained clothed.

From Renaissance to Neoclassical times, nude subjects, male and female, were strictly limited to religious figures, as a sign of reverence, and mythological figures, as symbols of history. A detailed, precise rendering of a nude was seen as the highest, and most difficult, form of art.

In more modern times, artists dared to depict everyday people nude. Critics claimed it was an ugly view of modern life.