

Introducing *Life on Mars* to Students

The 2008 *Carnegie International* presents artwork by 40 artists from around the world. The exhibition spans all media from painting, sculpture, and drawing to animation, film, installation, and sound, and it explores the perplexing proposition of what it means to be human in the world today.

The question, "Is there life on Mars?" is a rhetorical one, posing a metaphorical quest to explore humanity's response to a world where global events seem to threaten our everyday existence.

Before visiting *Life on Mars*, the 2008 *Carnegie International*, explore the thematic foundations of the exhibition. Douglas Fogle, the exhibition's curator, has several related thematic starting points that comprise *Life on Mars*.

From micro to macro levels of experience, from tragedy to comedy, this exhibition presents the unique perspectives and myriad responses of artists from all over the globe who look at the alien inside us. Questioning the absurdity of our lives yet demonstrating hope for humankind, these artists foreground the poetic over the monumental and the intimate over the heroic.

In the end, the exhibition poses a question each of us might answer: Are we ourselves already on Mars?

Approaching *Life on Mars* with Key Questions

One way to introduce the exhibition is to begin with the question implicit in its title:

Is there life on Mars?

Three leading questions under the title, proposed by the curator, are:

Are we alone in the universe?

Do aliens exist?

Or are we, ourselves, the strangers in our own worlds?

What do you think? Do you believe in aliens? How could we be viewed as strangers on Earth? Note the last question uses the plural "worlds"; are there, could there be more than one world?

Take a metaphoric approach. Have you ever felt like an alien? How is the experience of alienation central to the human experience?

Approaching *Life on Mars* with Thematic Foundations and Media

After discussing the questions, you might introduce some of the thematic foundations with particular instances of ideas that the curator mentions in an interview in *Frieze* magazine. Students may like to read Mr. Fogle's curatorial statement and video interview on the *Life on Mars* web site (see hyperlinks below).

You may begin with Mr. Fogle's reference points by showing visuals of them (next page) in-hand or projected on a screen, and then explain them to your students and see what kinds of dialogues they spark. Or, you may begin with the student handout, "Why *Life on Mars*?" and some of the expository media below.

You can click on the URLs in this guide to find the media resources and images for use in your classroom. Teachers should preview media before presenting to students to check for content appropriateness.

Media on the Thematic Foundations of *Life on Mars*



Magazine Interview

Douglas Fogle, Curator of *Life on Mars*, *Frieze* magazine Jan.-Feb. 2008, online at <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/carnegie-international/>

Video Interview

Douglas Fogle, Curator of *Life on Mars*, online at <http://blog.cmoa.org/CI08/video-audio-library.php>.



Curator's Statement

on the *Life on Mars* blog at <http://blog.cmoa.org/CI08/the-exhibition/the-exhibition.php>

Media on the Thematic Foundations of *Life on Mars*



YouTube Video

David Bowie's "Life on Mars" from the album *Hunky Dory*

at

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=ueUOTImKp0k>

Lyrics

David Bowie's "Life on Mars"

available at <http://lyricwiki.org/>

[David Bowie:Life On Mars](http://lyricwiki.org/David_Bowie:Life_On_Mars)

Pioneer 10 Pictorial Plaque

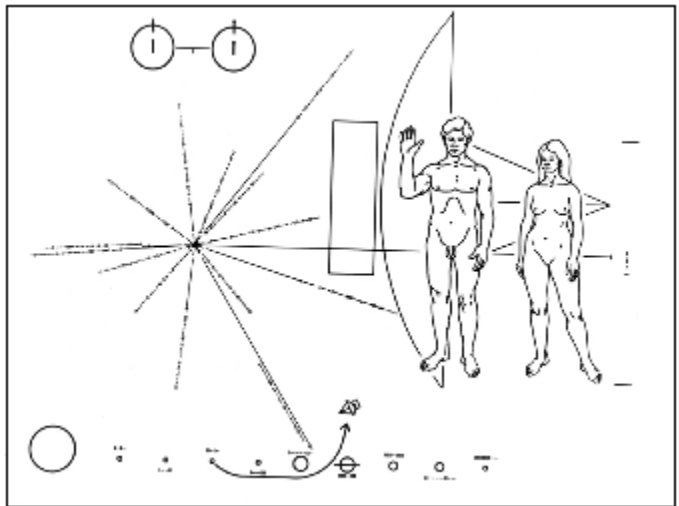
Showing Man, Woman, Solar System, and Earth's Position in Space is available at

<http://grin.hq.nasa.gov/IMAGES/SMALL/GPN-2000-001623.jpg>

Full description of the plaque is available at

<http://nix.larc.nasa.gov/info;jsessionid=4rr51n29a kp95?id=GPN-2000-001623&orgid=12>

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Earth from Space

NASA

Available from NASA at

<http://nix.larc.nasa.gov/info;jsessionid=4rr51n29akp95?id=GL-2002-001476&orgid=6>

© NASA

Untitled (Earth Drawing I)

Paul Thek

Untitled (Earth Drawing I), c. 1974

acrylic on 4 sheets of newspaper

44 x 66 in.

(111.80 x 167.60 cm)

Collection of Robert Wilson, Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York, CI08-007

Gallery 13

© The Estate of George Paul Thek



Available at [http://www.cmoa.org/searchcollections/Media/CI08/64/184/
Thek_01_T_standard.jpg](http://www.cmoa.org/searchcollections/Media/CI08/64/184/Thek_01_T_standard.jpg)

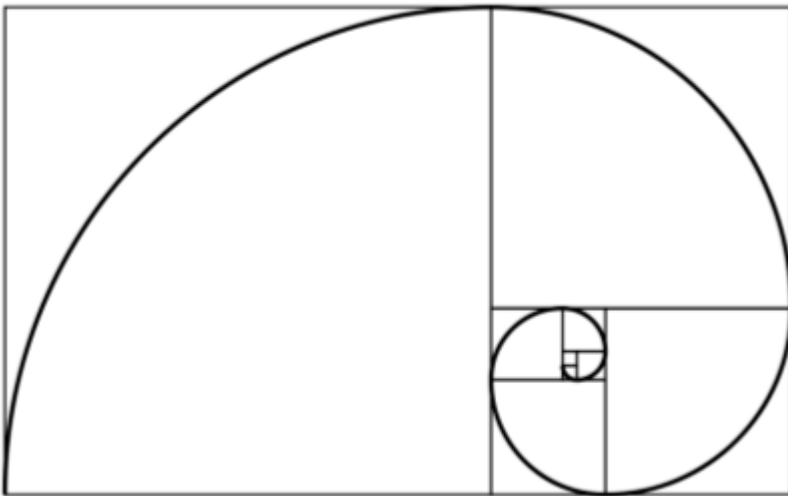
Fibonacci Numbers

The sequence of numbers, 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, ..., in which each successive number is equal to the sum of the two preceding numbers, named after Leonardo of Pisa "Fibonacci," who discovered this phenomenon in nature.

The Fibonacci Sequence is translated into the Golden Ratio, also called the Golden Proportion. Seen in nature and in the fine arts, this is a ratio between the two dimensions of subject such that the smaller is to the larger as the larger is to the sum of the two.

In *Life on Mars*, this ratio is explicitly used by Mario Merz, but implicit examples can be found in other works as well.

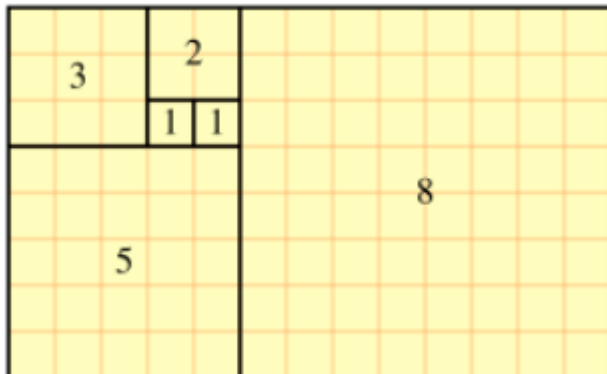
f_0	f_1	f_2	f_3	f_4	f_5	f_6	f_7	f_8	f_9	f_{10}
0	1	1	2	3	5	8	13	21	34	55



Fibonacci Spiral
Showing the Golden
Ratio

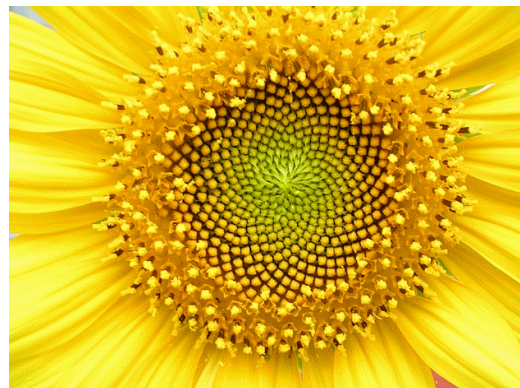
Credit: Wikipedia Commons

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Fibonacci_spiral_34.svg



Fibonacci Blocks

Credit: Wikipedia Commons



Helianthus Whorl Showing
Golden Ratio

Credit: Wikipedia Commons