

# The Masks of MSU



If you're looking for something fun to do this summer, consider a visit to a college campus museum. There are plenty of choices here in our great state. The Yak heard about a cool collection he just had to see, so he trekked over to Michigan State University in East Lansing, where he explored the MSU Museum's special exhibit, "MASK: Secrets and

Revelations."

Did you know that the MSU Museum has had an amazing collection of masks, many of them from Africa? They were not on display, but the new museum director, Gary Morgan, decided this collection – along with other masks would be a perfect exhibition to share.

We wandered up the stairs and peeked around the corner – every wall has amazing masks – colorful, eye-popping masks that made you gasp, smile or even shudder a little bit. Some resemble animals; others are clowns or evil spirits. But this collection reminds us of the masks in everyday life – a surgeon or nurse's mask; a hockey goalie mask, and masks we see in films and books – like Darth Vader, or Batman.

As Gary Morgan explained to us, this exhibit is special because it isn't divided



by geography, but organized in themes and looks at what these special pieces of art have in common. "The exhibit reminds people that masks are universal," said Gary.

The exhibit, for example, shows a grouping of masks from many cultures that represent nature and animals. Another grouping shows us the masks of entertainment, work and even war.

And being MSU, there are masks representing sports, including masks of mascots. You'll see one of the more historical "Sparty" masks from an early creation of the popular MSU Spartan mascot.

Can you try on a mask? Not the ones on the wall, but there's a wonderful touch screen video. You'll see your face and you can build a mask on the screen. You'll be amazed at how many combinations and creative ways you can make a mask.

The exhibition continues through the summer. There will be mask-making workshops for students, where you'll be able to create your own mask.

The MSU Museum is on West Circle Drive, near the MSU library and Beaumont tower. To find out more visit, [www.museum.msu.edu](http://www.museum.msu.edu) online.

Above left, As you explore masks of nature, you can spot the beautiful mask from Burkina Faso, of a Numa crocodile and hornbill. Left, a mask from Guerrero, Mexico, portrays a tiger.



Above, MSU mascot, Sparty, eyes the masks in the "Sport, War and Work" display, which include the Sparty fiberglass head from 1956 and the full mascot costume from 1989.

At left, an amazing carved mask from Nigeria.

## A WHALE OF AN EXHIBIT:

Make time for another museum on a college campus this summer – the University of Michigan Exhibit Museum of Natural History. This summer, you'll want to check out the updated permanent exhibit, "Back to the Sea: The Evolution of Whales." The exhibit, in large part, is due to many years of research led by U-M scientist Philip Gingerich. Since the 1980s, Gingerich and his team have located remains of more than a thousand whales in an area of the Egyptian desert known as Wadi Al-Hitan (Valley of the Whales). This area was underwater 37 million years ago, when whales, sea cows and other marine animals lived there. You'll feel like a fossil hunter when you visit – and find an amazing story.

The U-M Exhibit Museum of Natural History is at 1109 Geddes Ave. in Ann Arbor. To learn more, visit the U-M Exhibit Museum of Natural History: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/exhibitmuseum>

By Cathy Collison