



Explore with an Artist's Eye

“Through art, through travel, you experience a different way of living or a different philosophy,” says international art curator David Elliott (profiled below), who has headed museums in Tokyo, Stockholm, and Istanbul. By exploring another country’s art—and making it yourself—you learn directly from local people about their passions, traditions, and ways of life. Here are seven trips that use art to help you get inside cultures around the world.

THE CURATOR

NAME: David Elliott

BASED IN: Berlin and London

PROFESSION: Curator and cultural historian

UPCOMING PROJECT: Curating the 17th Biennale of Sydney, Australia, summer 2010

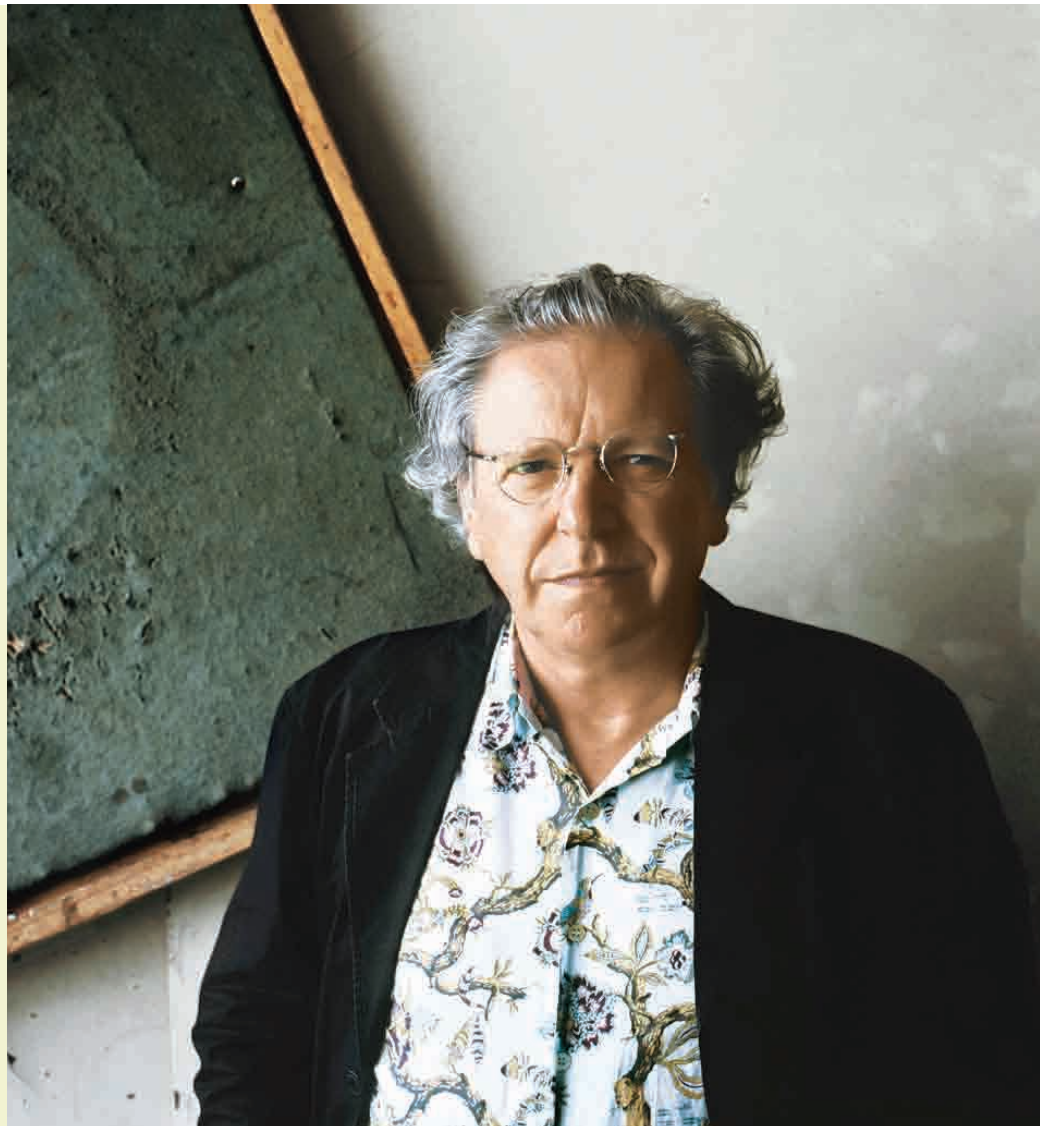
SPECIALTY: Exhibitions that integrate non-Western cultures and contemporary art

ON ART AND GLOBALIZATION: “The art world has become more global, but this can be homogenizing. We don’t want conformity. Art is really about the individual.”

FAVORITE CREATIVE CENTERS: “Mexico—in that it’s got things that are 2,500 years old, as well as remnants of the colonial period, the muralists of the early 20th century, and a very strong contemporary field. Thailand, where there are a lot of very good contemporary artists. India is really heating up, with an active art scene and a quite well-developed art market.”

HOW TO EXPLORE OTHER CULTURES

THROUGH ART: “You have to be curious to understand art, and if you’re curious, you start traveling. There isn’t a culture in the world that does not produce art, and no culture is better than another. Going to *biennales* [international contemporary art exhibitions] and museums is a good way of exploring, but it really helps to speak to someone you can trust who has local knowledge. All you need to get connected is the curiosity to find out about someone else’s culture.”



ART EVOLUTION: More than 70,000 years ago in South Africa, humans engraved designs on ochre stones, perhaps the world's oldest abstract art. Today, Palestinian graffiti artists with the Send-a-Message initiative (sendamessage.nl) have turned the concrete barrier dividing Israel and Palestine into a canvas, spray-painting it with love notes, falafel recipes, and wishes for peace from around the world. They'll add your message for 30 euros.

TRIPS WORTH TAKING



ARGENTINA

GRAFFITIMUNDO, 54/9-11-36-833-219, GRAFFITIMUNDO.COM

A new generation of street artists, many with backgrounds in graphic design, emerged in Buenos Aires after Argentina's economic crash in 2001. They have covered buildings in the city with stenciled slogans and vivid, cartoon-like characters—some political, some purely aesthetic—that are generally viewed as art, not vandalism. Graffitimundo's walking tour introduces travelers to these artists in the hip Palermo neighborhood.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Visit five studios, plus showrooms, public spaces, and galleries that feature the original works of street artists; talk with such artists as Tec, Jaz, and the "rondontwalk" stencil collective about their latest works, painting techniques, and the city's graffiti history.

HIGHLIGHTS: Create your own graffiti artwork under the guidance of a street artist (at an additional cost). Pick out a street-style painting to bring home. Chat with local artists at Hollywood in Cambodia, a graffiti gallery and bar.

PRICE: Three-hour tour from \$20.

ENGLAND

PORTLAND SCULPTURE AND QUARRY TRUST, 44/(0) 13-0582-6438, LEARNINGSTONE.ORG

Stone quarries on the Isle of Portland, in the English Channel, provided the building blocks for some of London's most famous monuments, including St. Paul's Cathedral and Buckingham Palace. The isle's artist-led Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust offers open-air workshops in stone carving taught by local sculptors.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Make a sculpture out of Portland stone using hand tools; learn about the stoneworking history, geology, and ecology of the Isle of Portland.

HIGHLIGHTS: Enjoy a pint of ale with your fellow stonemasons at the George Inn, Portland's oldest pub. Circle the isle on a coastal path with views of

FIRST PERSON

Common Threads

Liza Chiu / Art Workshops in Guatemala participant

"The first day, we walk into Lidia's home and see all these tapestries hanging everywhere. They are every color in the rainbow, and we start oohing and aahing. Lidia, the Mayan weaving instructor, comes out with her family, and she introduces everyone—her sisters, mother, children, and grandchildren. They show us the different weaving styles in the tapestries and in their clothing, including the woven symbol of the family, a bee. Everything is hand-made by Lidia and members of her family. Another student asks to try on a long wrap skirt. Then we all say, 'Can we? Is it OK?' We aren't sure if it's appropriate or not. But Lidia says, 'Yeah, sure!' She shows us how to wrap a skirt and tie it up. The whole family is laughing and throwing out a lot of 'Oh, you look so pretty in that! You look so good! You should get your own!' It feels just like when women at home try on each other's clothes."

former smugglers' coves, sheer cliffs, and pebbly beaches. Sleep in a bed-and-breakfast built in 1710 from Portland stone.

PRICE: Minimum one-week workshop from \$412, does not include meals or lodging.



GHANA

CROSS CULTURAL COLLABORATIVE, (617) 277-0482, CULTURALCOLLABORATIVE.ORG

Twice a year, nonprofit organization Cross Cultural Collaborative brings artists from other parts of Ghana to its center in Nungua, a small fishing village near Accra, to promote connection between African artists and international visitors. In the "Pottery, House Painting, and Indigenous Crafts" workshop, you'll work with women from the Frafra tribe in northern Ghana, famous for the unusual patterns they paint on their homes.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Paint good-luck symbols, such as protective snakes, on a house wall; learn African textile techniques, including stamping cotton cloth with *adinkra* (tattoo-like designs); make a traditional clay pot or grinding bowl; build a kiln from newspapers and clay.

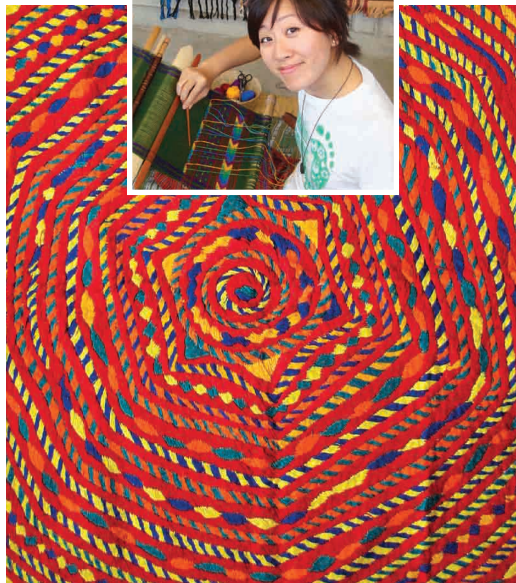
HIGHLIGHTS: Cook Ghanaian cuisine such as *red-red* (a black-eyed pea and cayenne pepper stew) with the house chef, Talk True. Watch a West African dance-and-drum-troupe performance. Stroll through the treetops on the 12-story-high walkway in Ghana's Kakum National Park.

PRICE: Two-week trip from \$1,999, includes lodging and meals.

GUATEMALA

ART WORKSHOPS IN GUATEMALA, (612) 825-0747, ARTGUAT.ORG

Mayan weaver Elda Lidia Tarton de Santos and her family provide one-on-one weaving instruction in the "Backstrap Weaving and Mayan Culture" course with Art Workshops in Guatemala. Backstrap weaving is a technique that uses a strap around



the weaver's back to create tension or slack on the loom, making it easier for the weaver to properly tighten the threads. Classes are held in Tarton de Santos's home just outside Antigua, a city famous for its Spanish colonial architecture, cobblestone streets, and hidden courtyards.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Weave a small wall hanging using the backstrap method; learn about the role of weaving in Mayan life through lectures, demonstrations, and museum visits; meet with women from a natural dye cooperative during an overnight trip to the villages surrounding Lake Atitlán.

HIGHLIGHTS: Make tamales in the home of a local family. Take part in a ceremony conducted by a Mayan spiritual guide. Visit the shrine of Maximón, a cigar-smoking folk saint.

PRICE: 10-day trip from \$1,795, includes lodging and some meals.



ITALY

MOSAIC ART SCHOOL, 877-766-7242, MOSAICSSCHOOL.COM

Once the capital of the western Roman Empire, Ravenna, in northeastern Italy, is home to eight basilicas, churches, and mausoleums dating from the 5th to 8th centuries that are recognized by the United Nations for the "supreme artistry" of their mosaics. At the city's Mosaic Art School, Italian artists Luciana Notturmi and Brunetta Zavatti teach the techniques of the ancient Roman and Byzantine mosaic masters through intensive weeklong workshops.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Create a traditional Roman mosaic and a modern mosaic, using both the double-reverse and direct techniques; cut Venetian smalti glass and marble; attend an art history lecture; view Byzantine and contemporary mosaic exhibits.

HIGHLIGHTS: Choose your mosaic pieces from 3,000 possible colors. Visit Ravenna's 5th-century Galla Placidia mausoleum to gaze at mosaics of starry skies, doves, and saints. Dine on the region's tagliatelle alla Bolognese.

PRICE: Five-day workshop from \$1,079, does not include lodging or meals.

FIRST PERSON

My Week with Madonna

Michael Photopoulos / Mosaic Art School participant

“My second mosaic is a copy of an icon of the Virgin Mary. Luciana, the teacher, says, ‘Because you’re interested in Byzantine iconography, I picked out this Madonna for you.’ When I first see the picture, I look at the face and the intricacy of all the stones and the tiles, and I think, ‘How am I going to do this?’ It’s art—not just putting tiles up in my bathroom. ♦ I start cutting some tiles, matching the colors to the skin tones on the face. I use marble and smalti, which is a type of glass that’s made in Venice. Because it’s a solemn picture, I choose lots of subtle shades of dark blue, but also gold. It’s rewarding to see the work unfold in front of me. I feel connected to this historical art form because I’m using the same techniques that artisans used 1,500 years ago. ♦ It takes about four days to finish. Finally I glue a piece of cheesecloth over the whole thing, mount the mosaic on cement, and leave it out overnight to dry. That entire night I’m thinking, ‘How did it turn out? How did it turn out?’ ♦ The next day, with the help of other people in the studio, I take off the cloth. It’s a ‘wow!’ moment. I walk away with a piece of art that I didn’t think I would be able to do.”



JAPAN

ARTISANS OF LEISURE, 800-214-8144, ARTISANSOFLEISURE.COM

The “Contemporary Art of Japan” tour with Artisans of Leisure takes visitors to six centers of modern Japanese art and architecture. The trip includes a personal guide, who arranges meetings with curators and gallery owners, and with Japanese artisans, who teach you about their craft and, upon request, provide hands-on instruction.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Learn how to embroider a kimono, apply gold leaf, dye silk, and arrange flowers (ikebana); discuss current trends with curators of modern art museums; shop the galleries in Tokyo’s Ginza district.

HIGHLIGHTS: Spend three nights at Benesse House, an art museum and boutique hotel on Naoshima island. Walk beneath cherry trees in Kanazawa’s Kenrokuen Garden.

PRICE: Private 13-day trip from \$21,565, includes lodging and some meals.

NEW ZEALAND

CREATIVE TOURISM NEW ZEALAND, 64/(0) 3-526-8812, CREATIVETOURISM.CO.NZ

In half-day to full-day workshops, Creative Tourism New Zealand connects travelers with Kiwi artists on both the north and south islands. Courses range from jewelry making to painting, and they often take place in the participating artists’ own studios.

WHAT YOU'LL DO: Carve a bone pendant with the “Bone Dude,” a contemporary Maori artist; make a felt bag with a local weaver using hand-dyed New Zealand wool; paint North Island landscapes in an artist’s studio.

HIGHLIGHTS: Sketch in your journal at Mount Difficulty vineyards. Meet local artists during Christchurch’s weekend market at the Arts Centre. Hike to the summit of Mount Pirongia, an extinct volcano with views of the Tasman Sea.

PRICE: Half-day to one-day workshops from \$36. **A**