Converging Cultures

Theme 1:
Converging Cultures

Introduction
Throughout history, economic needs, material desires, and political ambitions have brought people from different cultures and communities into contact, sometimes across great distances. Whether clashes or cooperative endeavors, these convergences have brought about the exchange of knowledge and ideas. In the visual arts, they have led to creative juxtapositions, hybrid styles, innovative forms, and the reinterpretation of traditional signs and symbols.

Session

Watch the Overview video (18 minutes).

Watch the Converging Cultures video (30 minutes).

Consider/discuss the following:

1. What works of art featured in the program reflect exchange that results when one culture takes over another? Do such exchanges benefit both the victor and the vanquished?

2. In some instances, a culture's "present" converges with its own "past," resulting in conflicting ideas or practices. How is this phenomenon visualized in the work of Kuroda Seiki? What other works can you cite in which ideas from the past and the present from the same culture have converged or collided?

3. Today, when artists around the world are exposed to global culture through the media, technology, tourism, and foreign trade, what makes an art object "authentic" to a particular culture?

4. What do works featured in the program by Miguel Luciano and Gentile Bellini reflect about the repercussions of trade between cultures? What does the namban screen convey?

5. What are some examples from the program in which one culture has adapted the religious iconography of another?

Between Sessions:
Go to the Web site at www.learner.org/courses/globalart and:

1. Explore featured artworks from this program, including the descriptive text and the expert perspective commentary.

2. Read the chapter about Converging Cultures in the downloadable text.

3. On the Web, compare selected artworks by considering the questions posed. Prepare to share your responses by taking notes. Bring your notes to the next session.