I'm Brian Szott, art curator at the Minnesota Historical Society. We're in art storage in the lower levels of the History Center in Saint Paul. Today I want to talk a little about some sculptures, all of which are recent additions to the permanent collection.

While the Minnesota Historical Society has more than 6,000 works of art in its collection, we have only a handful of sculptures. These three recent acquisitions are an attempt to remedy the situation. The first that you're looking at is a 1930s WPA funded sculpture by artist Irene Edwards. Like many women artists associated with the WPA, she was only active during that eight-year period of time so we don't know much about her. She did a mural for the Duluth Zoo during the WPA and a mural-like painting entitled Communication and this work, Mother and Child both of which were housed in the Ah-Gwah-Ching facility for more than 70 years before being transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society in 2007. This sculpture is made of cast, polished aggregate, a perfectly modern material. Oddly, we have an identical twin to this piece in our collection but it is cast in a ceramic, terra cotta material.

The next work we're looking at is by Evelyn Raymond. Born in 1908 in Duluth, she was described in a 1981 article as a “bold artist but a shy woman.” This work too is a work of a mother and child in the modern tradition with generous rounded forms, abstract figure sitting holding a child in her lap. She attended the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in the 1920s but left abruptly in protest to a faculty appointment in 1930. She is quoted as saying this about another work but I think it
applies to this sculpture as well quote: “I strove to depict to the best of
my ability the intelligence and beauty in the face and to give the figure
the strength and vigor she had to possess.” Another favorite quote of
mine describes her background and it’s this: “I was born in Duluth in
1908 of French and Canadian stock. I think those particular people have
a lot to do with Minnesota and I like being a Minnesotan. I think artist
should have roots.”

The final piece we’re looking at is by Steven Woodward, a
contemporary artist, called Dictionary dated 2005. Steve has had a 25-
year career as a public artist doing large-scale commissions throughout
the region and as a sculptor doing small-scale work like this one. Like
many contemporary artists of his generation, he is concerned about the
conflict and tension between culture and nature. This piece is
constructed of found birch bark and the most man-made of wood
products, plywood. He includes as growth on the birch bark cut out
dictionary pages - what better symbol of culture than a dictionary?