

TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET

Crafting Modernism: Midcentury American Art and Design
October 12, 2011 - January 15, 2012



Isamu Noguchi, *My Mu (Watashi no mu)*, 1950. Noguchi Museum



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WELCOME

Dear Educator,

We are delighted that you have scheduled a visit to *Crafting Modernism: Midcentury American Art and Design*. When you and your students visit the Museum of Arts and Design, you will be given an informative tour of the exhibition with a museum educator, followed by an inspiring hands-on project, which students can then take home with them. To make your museum experience more enriching and meaningful, we strongly encourage you to use this packet as a resource, and work with your students in the classroom before and after your museum visit.

This packet includes topics for discussion and activities intended to introduce the key themes and concepts of the exhibition. Writing, storytelling and art projects have been suggested so that you can explore ideas from the exhibition in ways that relate directly to your students' lives and experiences.

Please feel free to adapt and build on these materials and to use this packet in any way that you wish.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Museum of Arts and Design.

Sincerely,

Cathleen Lewis
Manager of School, Youth and Family Programs
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Lessons written by Petra Pankow, Museum Educator in collaboration with the Museum of Arts and Design Education Department.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME	1
THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN	3
HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOUR MUSEUM VISIT	4
<i>CRAFTING MODERNISM: Midcentury American Art and Design</i>	5
INTRODUCTION	6
ARTWORK	9
GLOSSARY	68
WEBOGRAPHY	70



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THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN has been functioning as an international resource center for craft, arts and design since 1956. Through its collections, exhibitions, programs and publications, the Museum serves as a forum for critical debate concerning the nature of craftsmanship and the engagement with the process that links materials, techniques, forms, patterns and concepts in all creative work.

HOW DOES A MUSEUM WORK?

Administration: The team led by the Director of the Museum determines the programs, plans and philosophy of the Museum. It also raises funds to realize the Museum's goals and works directly with the Board of Governors, which guides the Museum's functions.

Curatorial: This is the team, led by the Chief Curator, that works together to decide which exhibits will be shown, how they will look, what artwork is to be included, and how they are to be interpreted.

Registration: Led by the Registrar, this team arranges the safe handling of art to be placed in an exhibition and maintains the permanent collections acquired by a museum.

Education: This team provides the interactive interpretation of the objects on view through the educational programs designed for children, adults and families who visit the Museum.

Facility Maintenance: This is the team that allows the day-to-day operations of a museum to continue: from the lights being turned on, to the safety of all who enter the building.

Security Guards: This is the team most often seen in a museum, because its main task is to protect the artwork from harm so that in the future people will be able to see the same objects as seen in a museum today. They also are helpful to visitors who have a variety of questions.

Museums are places where we can learn about the past, present, and future of the world around us. The diversity of knowledge is endless when the habit of museum exploration is formed at an early age. We look forward to welcoming your group into our galleries.



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HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOUR MUSEUM VISIT

"I try, when I go to museums, to do two things. One, to appreciate what I'm looking at, just to see it, but then to isolate a few pieces that I really look at in detail. I study and I draw not with any purpose in mind. I mean, I don't go looking for specific things. I just try to be open-minded and keep my eyes open. It's interesting that every time I go back to the same place, I see something different." Arline M. Fisch (1931-) Brooklyn, New York

While visiting the exhibition try to use all your senses. Notice the way the pieces are displayed. *Are there any specific groupings of pieces you can distinguish? If you enjoy looking at one piece more than others can you explain why?*

Here are some questions and suggestions to think about as you move around the exhibition:

I. What can be objectively observed?

- a. *What is the physical description? Measurement, weight, materials used, articulation of materials...*
- b. *What iconography, if any, is used? Designs, words, diagrams...*
- c. *What are the object's formal design characteristics? Lines, shapes, forms, color, texture...*

II. What would it be like to interact with this piece of art? How would you handle, lift, display it?

- a. *How would the piece of art feel, move, and sound?*
- b. *What does the piece do? Does the piece have a function? How would the figures move if they were alive?*
- c. *What is our emotional response to this beaded figure? Fear, joy, indifference, curiosity, revulsion, excitement...*

III. What is in the mind of the artist? What are the viewers thinking and feeling? Use creative imagining and free association.

- a. Review all of the above information and consider what was going on in the world when the work was produced to develop possible interpretations of the piece. (Theories and hypotheses)
- b. *Do the figures tell a story? Does the piece have underlying political or social meaning? (Understanding and visual thinking)*
- c. Develop a program to investigate the questions posed by the material evidence. (Program of research)

IV. Brainstorm about an event or situation that is happening in your life at the moment which you could animate into one scene which could be made into your very own figurative sculpture. (Design themes)



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**CRAFTING MODERNISM:
MIDCENTURY AMERICAN ART AND DESIGN**

OCTOBER 12, 2011 – JANUARY 15, 2012



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INTRODUCTION

Focusing on the dynamic relationship between craft and design, this exhibition showcases the bold new directions taken in media and aesthetics in the postwar years. Featuring the work of iconic figures such as Isamu Noguchi, Ray and Charles Eames, and Peter Voulkos, *Crafting Modernism* underscores – through furniture, **textiles**, tableware, **ceramics**, glass, jewelry, sculpture and painting – the growth and transformation of American life in the period between 1945 and 1969.

The exhibition is organized into two broad sections. The first addresses the early postwar years from 1945 to the late 1950s during which time the independent craftsmen lifestyle became a compelling alternative to the anonymity of the corporate world. The rise of the craftsman-designer in industry and the influence of craft on modern design are explored in this section with examples in all media drawn from Herman Miller, Knoll, and George Nelson, Inc., among others. The second half of the exhibition focuses on the emergence of the crafted object as a work of art that is informed by **Abstract Expressionism**, **Pop Art**, **Funk**, and social commentary.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The hardship and atrocities of World War II, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the American Civil Rights Movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, the Vietnam War, the Women's Rights Movement – these are just some of the events of the tumultuous years between 1939 and 1969, which form a critical context for understanding the works of art assembled here.

In the two decades following World War II, craft artists adopted the formal spontaneity of **Abstract Expressionism**, the parody of **Pop Art**, the simplicity of color-field painting to explore the purely formal properties of production. However, this was a two way street. Just as **ceramicist** Peter Voulkos drew from **Abstract Expressionism**, fine arts practitioners also appropriated craft. Lucas Samaras, Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, and Robert Rauschenberg unreservedly wove **ceramic**, fiber, wood, found objects, and other materials into their work. In so doing, they upended time-honored conventions of painting and sculpture. These rich examples of artistic cross-fertilization are a special part of *Crafting Modernism*.¹

¹ Falino, *Crafting Modernism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2011), 22.



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One of the earliest catalysts of the Studio Craft Movement came from an unexpected source: the United States Government. The GI Bill (formally known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944) paid for millions of returning WWII veterans to go to college. This influx of some two million veteran students led to the rapid creation and expansion of programs in **ceramics**, fiber, metal, and wood around the country.

The pace of innovation in the academic realm was unprecedented and hard to imagine today. Suddenly craft shifted from its factory – and apprentice-based origins into the academic realm where students encountered contemporary artistic trends and theories for the first time. Of course, greater numbers of students meant an increase in educators. As a result, many European craftsmen and designers who had been displaced by the war, such as Josef and Anni Albers, found themselves teaching veterans at American universities. The financial stability of teaching gave many artists opportunity to develop their own work. Indeed, many of the artists whose work is represented in the show (including Robert Rauschenberg and Peter Voulkos) were veterans who benefited both from the support of the GI bill and academia.

Growing directly out of the trauma of the war and the hopelessness, anxiety and vulnerability that resulted from a face-to-face encounter with genocide and atomic disaster, **Abstract Expressionism** emerged as a new style of painting. It focused on the expression of the individual psyche and tried to unearth a universal visual language that drew symbolism from a variety of cultures, including Native American and African art. By highlighting improvisation, spontaneity, and gesture, artists elevated process as a critical element of their work, which in turn inspired many craftspeople to move away from **functional** design towards more expressive modes.

As the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, and women's liberation introduced sweeping changes to American society, crafts practitioners began to express cultural identity, artistic innovation, and social commentary in their work. Many others were choosing personal expression and the crafts lifestyle as a means of personal rebellion against the homogeneity and mass-production prevalent in American society.²

1960s countercultural movements caused by an increasing disenchantment with government and the machinations of business form the backdrop for yet another set of works in the exhibition. As the Civil Rights Movement and protests against the Vietnam War swept the nation, many artists gave creative expression to their political convictions.

² Ibid., 21.



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THEMES FOR DISCUSSION:

- Cross-fertilization between art and craft (Calder, Noguchi, Gottlieb, Rauschenberg, Samaras, Voulkos, Davis, Artschwager)
- Functional objects vs. art objects (Cooke, New, Eames) vs. (Noguchi, Voulkos, Artschwager)
- Global influences on artists after WWII (Noguchi, Eames, Davis, Lloyd New, Asawa)
- Spirituality and symbolism in art (Gottlieb, Kottler, Clark)
- The use of political activism in art (Rauschenberg, Clark, Kottler, Davis, Hernmarck)

RECURRING QUESTIONS:

- Discuss what the terms “art,” “design,” and “craft” mean for your students and come up with a list of attributes or definitions for each of them.
- In what way do each of these works of art challenge established boundaries between one artistic medium, technique, or style and another; between art and craft; between traditional handcrafting and industrial production?
- What different historical and cultural contexts do artists draw from in their work and why?
- What political positions do artists take in their work and how are these beliefs expressed?



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Isamu Noguchi
My Mu (Watashi no mu), 1950
Shigaraki ceramic
13. x 9. x 65/8 in. (34.3 x 24.1 x 16.8 cm)
Noguchi Museum, New York



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*I'm always trying to expand the possibility of sculpture and therefore to be tied to one material just merely limits me. It's like being tied to a style or tied to a certain technique. Then you're limited. You can't do more. To me the essence of sculpture derives very much from the material, you know, the truth of the material.*³ Isamu Noguchi

LOOK :

Take a moment to look closely at this object.

- What is the first thing you noticed? Why do you think this particular element of the work drew your attention?
- Describe the different components that make up its overall form.
- How are they connected?
- What color is the artwork?
- Consider the texture of this object. What do you think it would feel like to the touch? Try to list at least 3 adjectives.
- What material is the work made from?
- Do you think this object could serve a practical purpose? Which one? Can you come up with more than one possible **function**?
- In what way would the fact that the object is made from clay affect the ways in which it could be used? Please explain.

THINK ABOUT :

This ceramic sculpture was made by artist Isamu Noguchi, in 1950. During a time when craft and fine art were often regarded as two separate categories in the United States, Noguchi's work blurred the boundaries between them. On the one hand, he created non-**functional** artworks out of traditional craft materials like ceramic or wood. On the other, he crafted **functional** objects using the **abstract** formal language associated with mid-20th-century fine art. While "My Mu" looks like a stool, a side table, or a small shelf, it was conceived for display rather than practical use. A lifelong collaborator with architects, theater directors, dancers, and musicians, Noguchi placed central importance on experimenting with different styles, techniques, and materials.

- Read the quote at the top of this page. How does "My Mu" reveal "the truth of the material" it is made from?
- Do you agree that the "essence of sculpture" in this work "derives very much from the material"? In what way?

³http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3ATA%3AE%3Aex4692&page_number=9&template_id=1&sort_order=1&template_folder=abex



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DISCUSS :

Another way in which Isamu Noguchi bridged different worlds was through his many travels. Born in the U.S., he spent his youth in Japan, studied in Indiana and New York, and apprenticed with Constantin Brancusi (a famous modernist sculptor), in Paris. This itinerant lifestyle surely shaped his interests and unique perspective on art. Both modern European artists and artists in the Japanese **Zen** tradition thought a lot about the relationship between the sculptural form of an artwork and the surrounding space.

- In what way does the shape of “My Mu” interact with the open space around it?
- What elements of the sculpture enhance this interaction?
- How does the sculpture define “positive” (occupied) and “negative” (unoccupied) space, which are central elements of design?
- In terms of the “meaning” of this work, do you think this relationship between mass and void could be interpreted in a philosophical or even spiritual way? Please explain.

The word “**mu**” in its title as well as the void in the center of this sculpture refer to the mystical **Zen** concept of nothingness that is often understood in terms of a spiritual state in which an individual has managed to “empty” him/herself to an extent that they are no longer confused by world that confronts them. Noguchi takes this concept out of its original context in Japanese art and thought and gives it a more universal and, as suggested by the attribute “my” of the title, personal expression.

DO :

Using air-dry clay, create a sculpture that features a void (a hole or an open space), as its central feature. Your design could either be a vessel or other **functional** object or a sculpture. Think about how this void influences the meaning of your work and share with your classmates during a show and tell after everybody’s sculptures are finished.

COMPARE :

“My Mu” and similar works by Noguchi strongly influenced a revolutionary group of Japanese potters in the 1950s to depart from the centuries-old, highly formal tradition of Japanese **ceramics**. The most radical step was to move away from the ceramic object’s **function** as a vessel by closing off any openings. American ceramicist Peter Voulkos became famous in the 1960s for propagating the same shift, away from the **functional**



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object, toward the pure work of art. Compare and contrast “My Mu” and Voukos’ sculpture “Vee.”



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Charles Eames
Ray Eames
Walnut Stool, 1960
Walnut
15 x 13 x 11 in. (38.1 x 33 x 27.9 cm)
13in. top; 11in. bottom



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*You know, what looks good can change, but what works works.*⁴

Ray Eames

LOOK :

Take a minute to look at this object; then describe it in as much detail as possible.

- What do you notice about its form? What color is it?
- What material is it made of?
- How do you think it was made?
- What is its **function**? Try to think of as many ways of using it as possible.
- What might the artist who made it have been inspired by?
- Imagine experiencing this stool with all your senses (sight, touch, smell, sound). What are some of the adjectives you can come up with to describe it.
- What did the artist do to evoke the sensual qualities you listed?

THINK ABOUT :

Husband-and-wife team Charles and Ray Eames were among the most influential product designers of the post-WWII period. Their work ranged from exhibition design, film and architectural projects (most notably their own California home) to the creation of a large number of furniture items, many of which have become icons of modern design and are still manufactured today.

- Look at the stool once again. What about it seems “modern”? Please explain.
- Where do you think Ray Eames drew inspiration for this chair?
- Imagine seeing this stool as part of a casual living room arrangement. How would it fit into this context? How would it correspond with other furniture?
- Now picture the work in the lobby of a Manhattan skyscraper, made of glass and steel? How would the work appear different here?

When Ray Eames was commissioned to create a series of “occasional pieces” for the lobby of the brand-new Time & Life skyscraper in Manhattan in 1959, she drew inspiration from an African stool she owned. In contrast to African tradition, where stools are considered as highly individual, Eames’ stools were accessible to all in a public space and available to be used in a number of different ways.

- How do you think she was hoping for people to respond to it? What is your response to the stool?

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/11/AR2008011101696.html>



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DISCUSS :

Charles and Ray Eames were working closely with the large furniture manufacturer Herman Miller, which still produces this stool and other Eames designs. Despite their dedication to designing for industrial production, they were also acutely aware of the need for warmth, originality and a human touch in cookie-cutter suburban homes and impersonal corporate environments.

- In 1957, Charles Eames said: “In our world and in our time, we are deeply in need of the values which come under the head of ‘craftsmanship.’ I would venture to say that society today is more in need of these values than of any other thing.”⁵ What do you think he meant by this statement?
- In what way does the stool pictured above embody the ideal of craftsmanship?
- Do you think Eames’ statement is still relevant today? Please discuss.

DO :

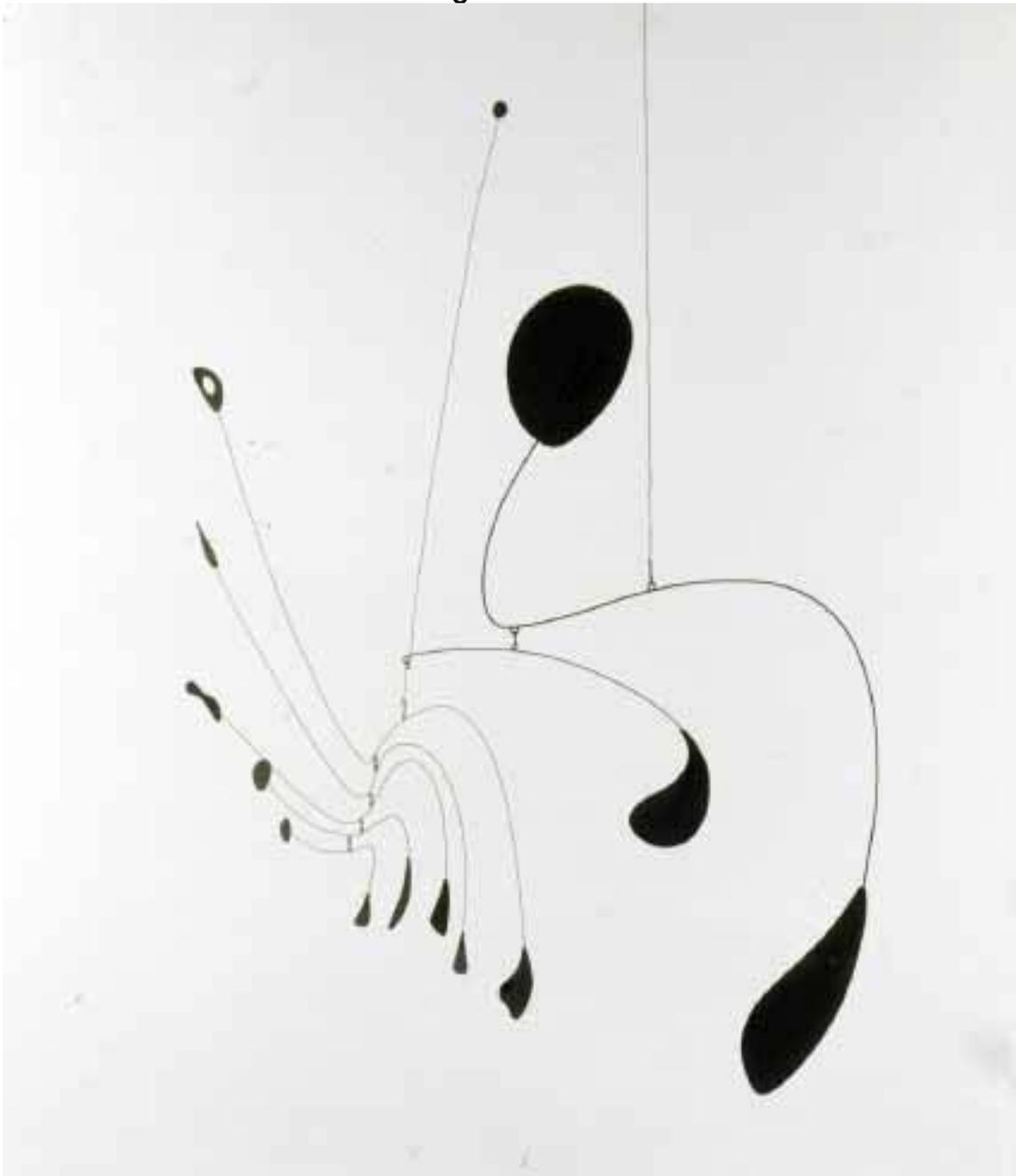
Ray Eames’s Walnut Stool combines different cultural elements. It is also **multifunctional**. Imagine you were a product designer asked to create an object that serves as least two, if not three or four functions at the same time. What would your design look like and how could it be used?

Make a sketch of your multifunctional design. What materials would you need and what techniques/processes would you employ to manufacture it?

⁵ Falino. 28.



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Alexander Calder
Hanging Spider, c. 1940.
Painted sheet metal and wire.
Overall: 49.x 35. in. (125.7 x 90.2 cm).
Whitney Museum of American
Art, Mrs. John B. Putnam Bequest, 84.41.



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*There is an element of the piper of Hamelin's tune in the purring and jiggling of a roomful of his "mobiles" that calls the child out of us in spite of ourselves. We grin and enjoy it. Then our conscience begins to trouble us. Something must be wrong: This is not the way one usually feels in a roomful of sculpture. Nevertheless in a roomful of Calder's we are conscious of a definite heightening of vitality that does associate itself somehow or other with the space-relationships, the architectonics, the line- and color-organizations, as well as the rhythms of the objects.*⁶

James Johnson Sweeney

LOOK :

Take a good look at this sculpture and describe it by focusing on the elements of design:

- What is the color of the work?
- What shapes do you notice and how are they combined to make up the object's overall form?
- What do you notice about the lines in the work, their length, width, and direction? How do they relate to each other?
- Can you guess what the artwork's texture is like?
- The image you are looking at is a photograph of a 3-dimensional work of art. Did you suspect that? Why? Why not?
- Compare Calder's work to a drawing. In what way are both similar? How are they different?

Now focus on how the artist used composition to arrange and organize the individual elements of his work by engaging a number of design principles:

- Does the artist establish a sense of balance? How?
- Where in the work is repetition used as design principle?
- Do you find that certain parts of the sculpture are emphasized over others? Please explain.
- How does the artist establish unity?
- What role does the idea of rhythm or movement play in the work?

THINK ABOUT :

Alexander Calder, who created this work in 1940, trained as an engineer before he embarked on a long and influential career as an artist. Working with untraditional

⁶ <http://calder.org/historicaltexts/text/8.html>



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materials like wire, leather, cloth, and other found objects, he used his skill and imagination to create kinetic sculptures. Initially, their movements would be controlled by mechanical devices like cranks and motors but eventually they would be animated by air currents alone and the **mobile** was born.

- While some of his works are completely **abstract**, others evoke forms found in nature. Does this work remind you of something you would find in a natural environment?
- What title would you give this **mobile**?

Calder's work blurs the boundaries between art and design. Nowadays, we think of **mobiles** mostly as decorative objects in a domestic environment.

- Where would you place this **mobile** and why?
- What might be different reactions to it by the people you live with?

DISCUSS :

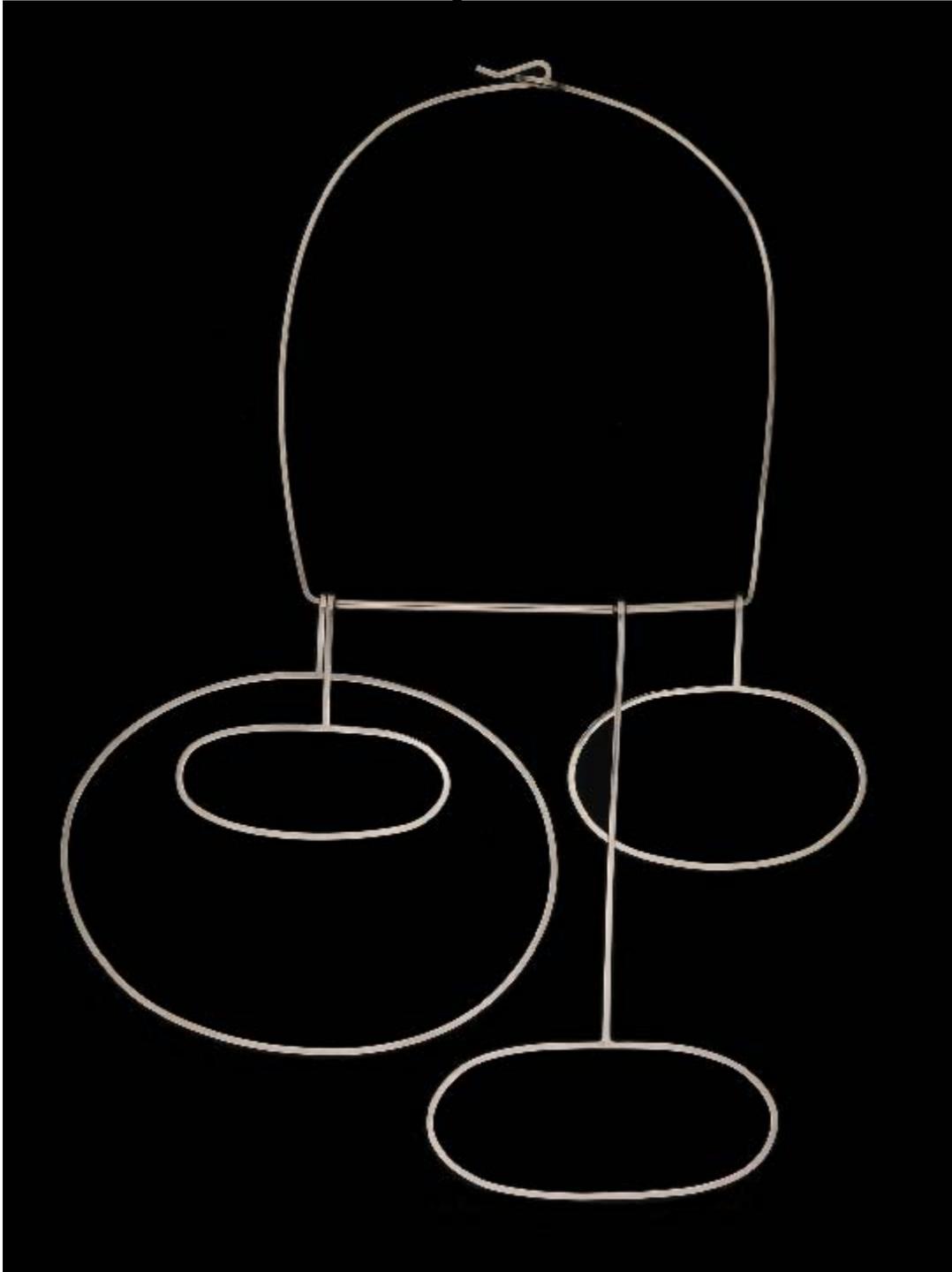
- Imagine a gust of wind, or the light touch of the breeze, animating this artwork, which Calder entitled "Hanging Spider." Come up with a list of words that would characterize the movement created (consider all the senses, especially what you would see, hear, and feel).
- How does this new take on sculpture redefine our role as viewers of the artwork?
- What is the difference in experiencing a Calder **mobile** as opposed to experiencing a static work of art?

DO :

Create your own **mobile** by attaching a number of found objects to one another. Think about your use of the elements of design (color, line, shape, form, space, and texture) Combine these elements to create a sense of balance, emphasis, rhythm, repetition, unity, and movement. Where would you place your artwork and what title would you choose?



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Betty Cooke,
Neckpiece, c. 1959.
Sterling silver
7. x 10 x . in. (19.1 x
25.4 x 1.9 cm).
Museum of Arts and Design, Gift of the artist, 1995.



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*In a practical sense, **function** in jewelry has little application or the safety pin would have taken care of everything long ago. Actually, the true **function** of jewelry is to appeal through the age-old business of attraction, attention, and admiration.⁷*

Betty Cooke

LOOK :

- Describe the work pictured above. What shapes do you recognize?
- How are they arranged?
- What do you notice about the artist's use of line?
- What materials did the artist use?
- What steps do you imagine went into making this work?
- What do you think is the **function** of this work? Please explain your answer.
- What would the object look like when worn?

THINK ABOUT :

Betty Cooke, who made this “Neckpiece” in 1959, has been on the forefront of designing modern jewelry since the 1940s. Her designs evolve from her drawings and are inspired by architecture, mathematics, and sculpture.

- Where are these influences apparent in “Neckpiece”?
- In what way do precision and spontaneity come together in this work?
- What about this design strikes you as “modern”? Please explain.

DISCUSS :

As a young designer, Cooke travelled across the United States to find retailers who would sell her jewelry. Since modernist jewelry was hard to find in many stores, she targeted modern furniture outlets that carrying **functional** designs by Charles and Ray Eames and other modern industrial designers.

- What might she have told the owners of these shops to convince them that her jewelry would appeal to the same clientele?
- Cooke said that one of the important ideas behind her designs is that “nothing is hidden.” What do you think she means by that? Would you say that this ideal is true for her “Neckpiece”? Please explain.

⁷ http://www.925-1000.com/amx_cooke.html



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DO :

Using charcoal or pencil, make a series of line drawings, or doodles. Pick one or combine a few and take these drawings as the basis for a piece of jewelry made out of wire (regular wire or telephone wire for color effects). It could be a ring, bracelet, necklace, earrings, or more whimsical wearable sculpture.



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Arline M. Fisch

Body Ornament, 1966

Sterling silver, synthetic crepe, and silk

Front: 45 x 12¼ in. (114.3 x 31.1 cm);

back: 41 x 4½ in. (104.1 x 11.4 cm);

vestment: 53 x 15½ in. (134.6 x 39.4 cm)

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Gift of the Johns on Wax Company through the American Craft Council, 1977



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*While in Denmark I discovered this wonderful collection of Mongolian jewelry, which was full-body adornment. Because the Mongols [...] were nomadic, the women all wore the wealth of the family, and so they had hats with great hanging elements, great pectorals, and things that hung all the way down the back. Another of the **Fulbright** people that year was a marine biologist, studying jellyfish, hydra medusae. I looked at books of hydra medusae and made several hanging forms in silver because I felt so inspired by their form and the way they move.*⁸

Arline M. Fisch

LOOK :

- What is the first thing that comes to mind when looking at this object?
- Please describe the work in as much detail as possible. Pay attention to color, line, shape, texture, and materials.
- What do you think the shapes **represent**?
- What do you think the **function** of this object is?

THINK ABOUT :

This “Body Ornament” by Arline Fisch is a dramatic piece of wearable art consisting of a black silk gown worn under two sculpted silver panels (front and back), which hang over the wearer’s shoulders.

- Imagine wearing this. What would that feel like on your body?
- What would it be like to move around while wearing this piece? How might it influence your movements?
- In what way would your movements change the appearance of the work?

DISCUSS :

“Body Ornament” was inspired by Mongolian body adornments that allowed nomadic women to wear the family’s wealth on their person when moving from place to place.

- Body adornments play an important role in many different cultures. Can you think of any other examples (headdresses, masks, dance costumes and regalia)?
- In what way are they similar to or different from Arline Fisch’s wearable sculpture?
- Why do you think so many modern (and contemporary) artists have been attracted to artwork from cultures other than their own?

⁸ <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-arline-m-fisch-12589>



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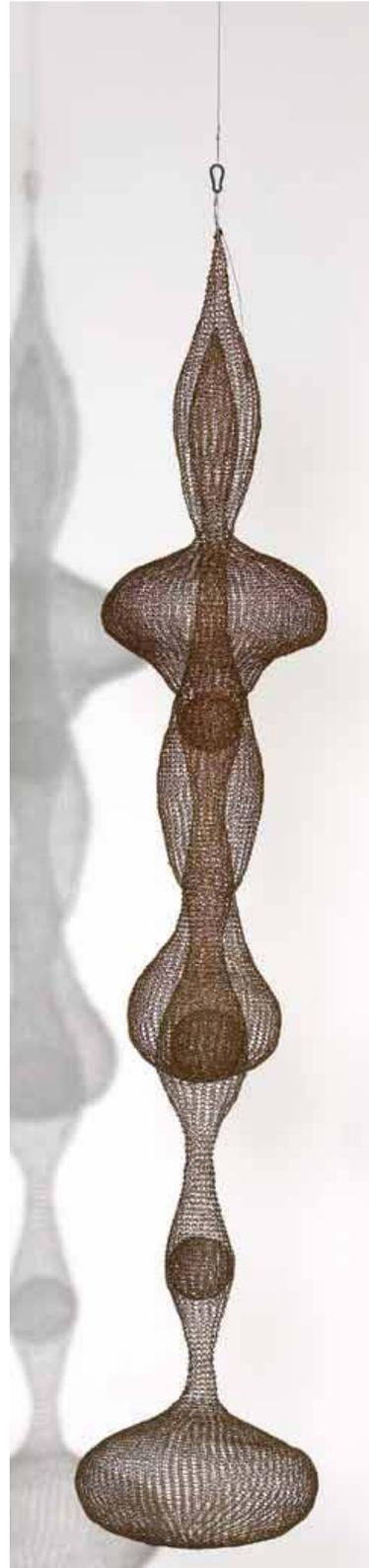
- In what way do these influences enrich modern and contemporary art? Are there ways in which artists need to be careful about appropriating imagery and iconography from other cultures?

DO :

Create your own body ornament out of paper, wire, feathers, or any found objects (paper cups and plates, plastic cutlery, rubber bands, etc.). Consider the way in which the work will interact with your body and your movements.



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Ruth Asawa
Untitled, c. 1968
Copper and brass wire
H. 123 in. (312.4 cm), diam. 16 in. (40.6 cm)
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



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*I was interested in [...] the economy of a line, making something in space, enclosing it without blocking it out. It's still transparent. I realized that if I was going to make these forms, which interlock and interweave, it can only be done with a line because a line can go anywhere.*⁹
Ruth Asawa

LOOK :

Take a look at this work and start describing it:

- What shapes do you notice?
- How did the artist combine individual elements to form a whole?
- What is the role of line in this work?
- Describe the color/s of the object.
- In what way are color and form related in this work?
- Describe the texture of the object (based on what you can see).
- What material do you think the artist used?
- What process did the artist use to manipulate her material?
- How would you describe the work in terms of design principles like balance, repetition, unity, and rhythm?
- What did the artist do to achieve some of these effects?
- How do you think this work would be displayed? Why?

THINK ABOUT :

Artist Ruth Asawa grew up on a farm. Sitting on the back of a horse-drawn leveler (which would level the ground to allow even cultivation and watering of crops), she would drag her feet through the dirt, moving them out, and in, and out again, while the horses moved forward.

- In what way does this childhood experience manifest itself in the shapes found in Asawa's wire sculptures?
- The artist considered her sculptures three-dimensional drawings. What aspect of the work underlines this point?
- Imagine moving around the sculpture depicted above. In what way would its appearance change, depending on the angle, perspective, or distance from which you look at it?
- In what way would Asawa's sculptures, displayed on their own or in groups, transform the space in which they are displayed?

⁹ <http://www.ruthasawa.com/crochetwire.html>



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- What sort of place or space would you expect this work to be installed in? Please explain.
- Where would you display the work? Why? What do you think your friends and family would say about the work if they passed it there? Please explain.

DISCUSS :

In the late 1940s, Asawa attended Black Mountain College, a cutting-edge liberal arts school which stressed interdisciplinary work, experimentation, and experience over rote learning. Encouraged by her art teacher Joseph Albers, she started to use everyday materials in new and uncommon ways. The idea for her wire sculptures was born during a study trip to Mexico, where Asawa observed local women using crocheting techniques to make egg baskets from galvanized wire.

- What are some of the things you associate with metal (wire)?
- What are some of the things you associate with a handcraft like crocheting?
- How do Asawa's material (metal wire) and process (crocheting) shape the meaning, or message, of the work?
- How do think the categories of art and craft play out in Ruth Asawa's work?

While Asawa was often labeled a weaver or fiber artist, terms associated with craft, domesticity, and women, she was celebrated as a sculptor after her work attracted the attention of *TIME* magazine, in 1955.

- Do you think these sorts of labels matter? Do they still have the same importance and meaning today?

DO :

Forming small groups of about 3 students each, take a second look at the work and try to “transcribe” its forms into a layered, musical rhythm. Using either sound (stomping, humming, banging, clapping, etc.), movements, or both, create a short performance piece based on Asawa's work.



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COMPARE :

Like Alexander Calder's **mobiles**, Asawa's wire sculptures are suspended from the ceiling. Discuss similarities and differences in the way the works of both artists interact with and transform the space in which they are displayed.



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Irving Harper
Designer for George Nelson and Associates
Schiffer Prints Division; Mil-Art Co., Inc., manufacturer
China Shop, c. 1953.
Printed cotton.
62. x 52. in. (158.8 x 133.4cm)
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Geoffrey N. Bradfield, 1995; 1995.355.



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LOOK :

- Look closely at this image. What different sorts of shapes do you notice?
- Do you see any repeating shapes?
- How are they arranged?
- What colors do you notice?
- How would you characterize the relationship between color and shape in this work?
- The image is a photograph of a piece of fabric. Can you think of one or several ways to use it?
- How do you think the fabric was made?

THINK ABOUT :

- Do any of the designs remind you of objects you might see in everyday life?
- What do they have in common?
- Come up with a few words to describe your overall impression of this pattern.
- Can you think of a title?

Created by Irving Harper, the little-known designer behind many of the iconic products made by George Nelson Inc. and Herman Miller, this fabric design is called “China Shop.”

- Can you think of a reason Harper was interested in using ceramic vessels as a subject for his design?

DISCUSS :

Many classic mid-century furniture and interior design items combine a handmade look and industrial production methods.

- Is this true in the case of this fabric? Please explain.
- Printed fabrics have a long history in many world cultures, from manual techniques like block printing and stenciling to industrial screen printing methods, all of which allow for the same design to be issued in a range of different color schemes.
- Come up with an alternative combination of three colors for this design. In what way would your color scheme change the mood or even message of this design?



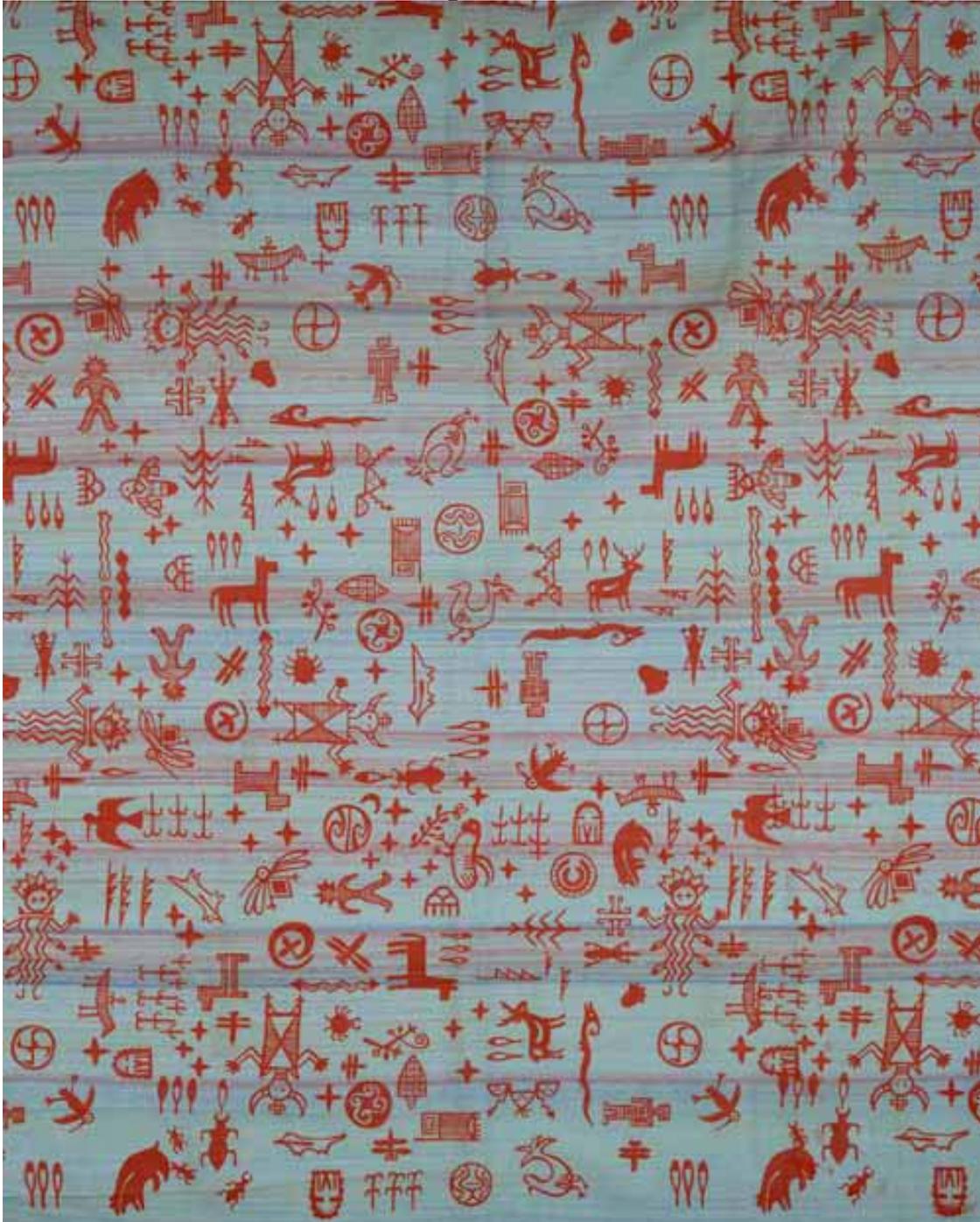
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DO:

Using potatoes, rubber carving blocks, or Styrofoam, make two or three stamps with simple organic, geometric or figurative designs. Using paper or fabric as a surface to print on and two colors (mixing allowed!), create a pattern, keeping in mind such principles of design as unity, rhythm, and balance.



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Lloyd Kiva New
Dress Fabric, c. 1960
Hand-screened silk.
35. x 27. in. (90.2 x 70.5
cm). Heard Museum Collection,
Phoenix, Arizona, 4422-2.



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*And while everyone knows that the world of fashion is indeed strange and capricious, it nonetheless represents one of the most basic and compelling of artistic impulses, from the simplest to the most complex of cultural enclaves – each has engaged in one form or another in the art of personal adornment.*¹⁰
Lloyd Kiva New

LOOK :

Describe this fabric in as much detail as possible.

- What animals do you see?
- What other sorts of objects can you identify?
- What shapes repeat?
- What colors do you notice and what can you say about the use of color in the work?
- How do you think it was made?
- How might this fabric have been used?

THINK ABOUT :

Lloyd Kiva New was the first Native American to study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (in the 1930s) and to participate in an international fashion show (in the 1950s). While his designs were sold at high-end stores like Neiman Marcus and featured in the *Los Angeles Times* in the 1950s, he was also a lifelong advocate for other Native American artists.

- Have you ever seen a Native American artifact? What was it? In what way was it similar or different from the artifacts incorporated in the image above?
- Based on your prior knowledge, do you think any of the designs on the fabric point to Native American life? Please explain.
- Do you think the designs on his “dress fabric” could have symbolic meaning? Please give a few examples.

DISCUSS :

New established the Institute of American Indian Arts where he encouraged Native artists to explore the possibilities of modern art while also staying true to their tribal roots.

¹⁰ <http://www.iaia.edu/lloyd-kiva-new-the-father-of-contemporary-native-fashion-design/>



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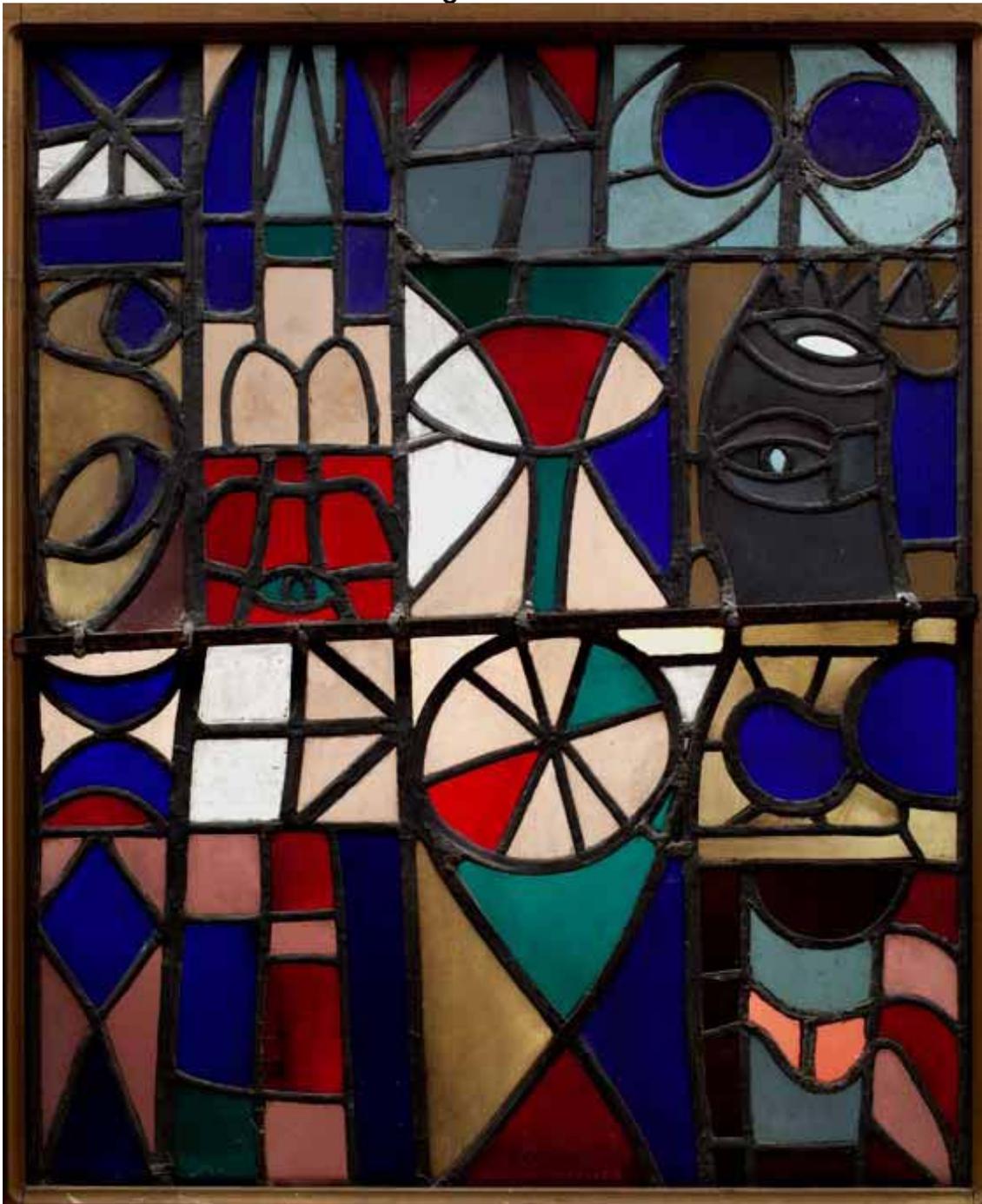
- As we have seen, this fabric points to a number of Native American styles and traditions. What does this design also have in common with more traditional fabric design?
- What about his work might have appealed to his customers in the 1950s?
- If you were to turn this fabric into an article of clothing, what would you make and what would it look like?

DO :

Using potatoes, rubber carving blocks, or Styrofoam, make two or three stamps with simple organic, geometric or symbolic designs. What are some important symbols of our culture today? Using paper or fabric as a surface to print on and two colors (mixing allowed!), create a pattern, keeping in mind such principles of design as unity, rhythm, and balance.



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Adolph Gottlieb, designer
Heinigke & Smith, manufacturer
Untitled (Stained Glass Window), c. 1954
Stained glass
29 x 24. in. (73.7 x 62.2 cm)
Collection of the Adolph and
Esther Gottlieb Foundation, New York , NY



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*The role of the artist, of course, has always been that of image-maker. Different times require different images. Today when our aspirations have been reduced to a desperate attempt to escape from evil, and times are out of joint, our obsessive, subterranean and pictographic images are the expression of the neurosis which is our reality. To my mind certain so-called **abstraction** is not abstraction at all. On the contrary, it is the realism of our time.*¹¹ Adolph Gottlieb

LOOK :

- What is the first thing you noticed in this work?
- Do you notice any recurring shapes? What are they?
- How did the artist use light and dark in his composition?
- What materials do you think the object is made of?
- What process do you think was used to create it?
- In what way would the appearance of the work change if it was installed as a window and lit by sunlight?

THINK ABOUT :

Adolph Gottlieb was one of the leading proponents of **Abstract Expressionism**, the art movement which swept through New York after World War II and put the United States on the international modern art map. His paintings (and glass works based on his drawings), which he called Pictographs, consist of simply drawn, often symbolic images. Like many fellow Abstract Expressionists, Gottlieb was very interested in archetypes, universal symbols often linked to prehistoric, “primitive” or folkloric imagery.

- Pick one or two of the symbols you notice in this work. What do you think it could stand for?
- Gottlieb was not interested in direct translations of the images in his works. Rather, he was more interested in conveying an “emotional truth.” Do you think he is successful in doing so with this work? Partner up with a classmate and talk about possible interpretations of this work, then report back to the class.

DISCUSS :

In 1947, Adolph Gottlieb wrote: “The role of the artist, of course, has always been that of image-maker. Different times require different images. Today when our aspirations have been reduced to a desperate attempt to escape from evil, and times are out of joint, our obsessive, subterranean and pictographic images are the expression of the neurosis

¹¹ <http://gottliebfoundation.org/the-artist/selected-artists-writings/3/>



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which is our reality. To my mind certain so-called **abstraction** is not abstraction at all. On the contrary, it is the realism of our time.”

- Discuss and interpret the quote above in the historical context in which it was made (immediate aftermath of WWII and the Holocaust, the beginning of the Cold War).
- Gottlieb believed that his emotionally charged and **abstract** Pictographs suited the spirit of the 1940s and 50s. Do you think there is particular sort of image “required” by our own time? Please explain.

DO :

Create a simple, symbolic shape and turn it into a 4x4-inch mini artwork. While you can simply draw it on paper or cardboard, think of a number of other techniques you could use, like making a fabric/felt collage, scratching it into a wet tile made of air-dry clay, or cutting it out of paper. At the end of the class, all students combine their work into a large quilt-like group project by laying their tiles out on the floor or mounting them on the wall in a grid pattern.



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Peter Voulkos

Vee, 1958

Stoneware, sand, iron and cobalt brush drawing

89. x 57³/₁₆ x 39³/₈ in. (227.3 x 145.3 x 100.1 cm)

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,

Gift from the Estate of John Lowell Jones and Charlotte Johnson Jones 2004.36.1



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*Peter Voulkos inspired a generation of artists to liberate themselves from ceramic tradition by focusing on experimentation and personal expression. [...] Influenced by the rough energy of **Abstract Expressionism** and the beat culture and jazz in Northern California in the 1950s, his experimental and improvisational work led to discussions about the increasingly blurred boundaries between craft and art.¹²*

LOOK :

- How would you describe the object pictured above in one sentence?
- List a few of the key things you notice about it.
- Take another look and describe it in a more systematic way: what shapes do you notice? How are they combined?
- What can you tell about the use of color in the work?
- What would the process of crafting such an object have been like?

THINK ABOUT :

Peter Voulkos, the artist who created this work, was trained as a potter and became one of the most influential ceramists of the 20th century. By bringing the ideas, scale, and aesthetic of **Abstract Expressionism**, the dominant art movement in the late 1940s and 50s, to **ceramics**, he revolutionized the field. He was the first ceramist to cut ties with **functionalism** by making vessels of unprecedented scale and vitality, revealing a commitment to process. He took risks, and his work embodied energy.

- What sorts of objects come to mind when you think of the terms pottery or **ceramics**? Do these objects have anything in common?
- Does the object pictured above fit into these categories? Why? Why not?
- What sort of emotional message do you think the artist was trying to convey? Explain your answer.

DISCUSS :

One important feature of **Abstract Expressionism** was the idea of the gesture – that works of art should evoke the body of the artist who painted with sweeping brushstrokes, stretched into the furthest reaches of a large canvas or literally walked, danced, and squatted on a canvas laid out on the floor rather than propped on an easel.

¹²http://collections.madmuseum.org/code/emuseum.asp?emu_action=searchrequest&moduleid=2&profile=people¤trecord=1&searchdesc=Peter%20Voulkos&style=single&rawsearch=constituentid/,/is/,/1370/,/false/,/true



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- In what way is Voukos' sculpture gestural?
- The work is over seven feet tall. How do you think scale influences how people respond to it?



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Michael Frimkess

Things Ain't What They Used To Be, 1965

Stoneware and china paint

37. in. (95.9 cm); diam. 13 in. (33 cm)

Museum of Arts and Design, Gift of the Johnson Wax Co., through the American Craft Council, 1977



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*In the '60s when I had opportunity to decorate a vessel, a historical shape, the first thing I thought of [were] those cartoons I used to see, although there are no pages, but there's an entire segue, in that it went around the pot and started over again. And that inspired me, you know, and I could tap into that experience again, although there weren't any pages. But you could have an opportunity to do a literary endeavor.*¹³

Michael Frimkess

LOOK :

- What is unusual about this object?
- Describe the people depicted: What are they wearing? What are they doing? What does their body language tell us about them? What other information about them can we gather?
- What do you think the individual steps in the process of making this were?
- What is the **function** of this object?

THINK ABOUT :

Michael Frimkess was a student of Peter Voulkos at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles in the mid-1950s. Though he was inspired by his teacher's radical formal and technical experiments, he ultimately turned to classical Greek and Chinese vases for inspiration and abandoned Voulkos' free-from **abstract expressionism** for a sense of balance and geometry. His vessels are created at the potter's wheel and then painted in a whimsical comic-book style. The scene depicted in the cartoon "Things Ain't What They Used To Be" shows the **ceramics** department of Columbia University's Teacher's College and offers a glimpse of the interactions between students, teachers, and staff.

- Artists are often influenced by what they see in the world around them: in nature, in museums, or in their everyday surroundings. What do you think were some of the things that inspired **ceramic** artist Michael Frimkess to create this vessel in 1965?
- Do you see any references to things that are part of your everyday life? Please explain.
- In what way does the work mix different styles, periods, and ideas?
- Compare and contrast this work with the Voulkos sculpture 'Vee'. What is different? What is the same?

¹³ <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oral-history-interview-michael-and-magdalena-suarez-frimkess-13128>



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DISCUSS :

Frimkess was a proponent of **Funk** Art, the 1960s art movement that used popular culture, narrative content, humor, and political or autobiographical content as an alternative to the **non-objective** tendencies of Abstract Expressionism, which had dominated the art world (including **ceramics**) for the past 15-20 years.

- In what way do these ideas relate to Frimkess' vessel?
- What in the work strikes you as humorous or playful?

DO :

Partner with a classmate and come up with a short comic-style narrative taking place in your classroom. Pick a small handful of players and a few interesting/funny/typical dialogues that might take place on a regular day at school. Then, using black markers, draw your scene onto a paper cup or plate and color it in. Mount an exhibition of everybody's vessels in the classroom.



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Lucas Samaras

Chair Transformation Number 10A, 1969–70

Melamine laminate, wood, and wool

38 1/8 × 20 × 18 in. (96.8 × 50.8 × 45.7 cm)

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

purchase with funds from the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation Inc., 70.1572

Since the 1960s, Lucas Samaras has devoted his art to the evocation of an intensely private, obsessional, sometimes hallucinatory realm. Among the many motifs that occur in his work, the chair is especially prominent. The "Chair Transformation" series has included provocative sculptures executed in a variety of materials including wood, wire mesh, and mirrored glass. Throughout the series, Samaras transforms the ordinary object into a fantastical one, evoking a dreamlike metamorphosis.¹⁴

LOOK :

- What sort of object is this? Describe its overall shape.
- Compare the right and left side of the work by contrasting the following aspects of it:
 - Color
 - Line
 - Shape
 - Texture
- Can you come up with a good title for this work?
- What story do you think the artist is trying to tell?

THINK ABOUT :

Like many artists in the 1960s and 70s, Lucas Samaras was interested in expanding the traditional conventions of painting and sculpture by experimenting with different media (furniture, photography, jewelry). Known for his inventive use of materials ranging from wool, wood, and **Formica** to pins and Polaroids, Samaras ventured into the field of craft to try out new artistic techniques.

- How might “Chair Transformation Number 10A” be seen as a work of art? How might someone argue it was craft?

¹⁴ <http://www.nga.gov/feature/sculpturegarden/sculpture/sculpture11.shtm>



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- **Functionality** is an important aspect of traditional craft and design. Do you think you could use this chair? Why? Why not?

DISCUSS:

- In what ways is Samara's "chair" a reflection on the theme of "transformation"?
- Discuss the importance of process both for the making the physical object and the meaning the artist is trying to communicate through it.

DO:

Samaras likes to work in series. His "chair transformations" was one such series. Team up with 2 or 3 classmates and imagine the story of a metamorphosis that you could tell by crafting a chair transformation. Consider if you want your work to be **functional** or not and base your process on this decision. Think about "found object" materials that you could use, then make a sketch and implement your design by composing these mixed media materials into a compelling whole. Find an evocative title and exhibit the work in your classroom.



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Richard Artschwager
Description of Table, 1964
Melamine laminate, and plywood
26¹/₈ x 31⁷/₈ x 31⁷/₈ in. (66.4 x 81 x 81 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York ,
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation Inc ., 66.48



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*Sculpture is for the touch, painting is for the eye. I wanted to make a sculpture for the eye and a painting for the touch.*¹⁵
Richard Artschwager

LOOK :

Take an extensive look at this object and describe it.

- What colors do you notice?
- What does each of these colors **represent**?
- How do you think the artist intended for it to be used?
- What is the relationship between what the object looks like and its intended **function**?
- The artist called this work “Description of Table”. Why do you think he chose that title?
- Does it add something to your initial impression of the work? Please explain.

THINK ABOUT :

This “surrogate table” was created by American artist Richard Artschwager in 1964. After studying chemistry and biology at university and spending some time at art school, Artschwager founded a cabinet making business. By 1956, he was mass-producing a line of furniture. However, when a fire destroyed his shop, he was forced to reconsider his career and started to create furniture as art objects. While his experience as a cabinet maker gave him ample opportunity to explore wood as a material for furniture making, in his sculptural work, Artschwager turned to cheap, new materials like **plywood** and **Formica** instead.

- Why might he have used these cheaper materials?
- Do you think Artschwager succeeded in creating a “sculpture for the eye and a painting for the touch”? Please explain.
- How does this work relate to Lucas Samaras’ Chair Transformation Number 10A, 1969–70?

DISCUSS :

¹⁵ <http://www.gagosian.com/exhibitions/24th-street-2008-01-richard-artschwager/>



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Art critics have described Artschwager's work by connecting it to the three major art movements of the 1960s: **Pop Art**, which was interested in taking common objects out of their original everyday context; **Minimalism**, which explored the physical presence of

geometric forms and industrial materials regardless of metaphorical meaning; and **Conceptual Art**, which valued ideas over the material qualities of an artwork.

- Research **Pop Art**, **Minimalism**, and **Conceptual Art** and describe how “Description of Table” does and doesn’t fit into each of these categories.
- Like many of his 1960s contemporaries, Artschwager became interested in removing the **functional** aspect from handcrafted objects. He once said that “by killing off the use part, non-use aspects are allowed living space, breathing space.” What do you think he means by that? With “Description of Table,” do you think he is successful in achieving this intention?



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Robert Rauschenberg

Signs, 1970

Screenprint

sheet: 43 x 34 in. (109.2 x 86.4 cm);

composition: 35 3/16 x 26. in. (89.4 x 67.9 cm)

Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Leo and Jean -Christophe Castelli in Memory of Tony Castelli , 369.1988



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*[Signs was] conceived to remind us of love, terror, violence of the last ten years. Danger lies in forgetting.*¹⁶

*It is impossible to have progress without conscience.*¹⁷

Robert Rauschenberg

LOOK :

- Going around the class, take turns describing the elements of this collage. Do you recognize any of the people or events shown?
- What emotions does this work evoke?
- Concentrate on an individual's hands or facial expression, and the composition of lines in the image. How do they relate to one another?
- Do you feel that your eyes keep returning to a part of the work? If yes, which part?
- Why do you think that particular area arrests your attention?
- Can you think of a good title that summarizes the message of this work?
- Robert Rauschenberg entitled this work "Signs." What do you think that means?
- Imagine a soundtrack going along with this image. What are some of the things you might hear?

THINK ABOUT :

Robert Rauschenberg, who created this work in 1970, was an influential artist whose work often blurred the boundaries between sculpture, photography, and printmaking. Rauschenberg also embraced popular culture and often incorporated everyday objects into his art, thus tying it to the place and time in which it was produced. He felt that the artist's job was to be a witness to his or her own time in history.¹⁸

- In what way does "Signs" illustrate this viewpoint?
- Why do you think Rauschenberg thought that "witnessing" was important? What do you think he meant when he said that "danger lies in forgetting"?
- Does this hold true for our own time? Can you think of a particular event or events people strive to remember? Please explain your choices.

¹⁶ <http://artsconnected.org/resource/95154/signs-gallery-label-current>

¹⁷ <http://art-for-a-change.com/blog/2008/05/robert-rauschenberg-1925-2008.html>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*



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DISCUSS :

Rauschenberg depicts a tumultuous time in American history. “Signs” was originally commissioned by TIME magazine as a cover for an issue early in the year 1970 – the cover was meant to evoke the decade of the 1960s. In his collage, Rauschenberg took a sweeping perspective and combined a range of magazine and newspaper images.

- Form research teams to find out more about some of the events and iconic figures depicted here: Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, race riots, the Vietnam War, John and Robert Kennedy, the walk on the moon, Janis Joplin and the Woodstock music festival and share your findings in short reports.
- There are both positive and negative images in the collage: What do the individual clippings communicate and how?
- What is the overall effect of juxtaposing these images?
- When Rauschenberg submitted his design to TIME, it was rejected. Why do you think the magazine’s editors had reservations about this work?

DO :

Imagine you were trying to capture the essence of the last 10 years. Think of a similar mix of positive and negative political, cultural and popular culture events. Research these events and find one iconic image for each of them on the internet. Combine the pictures into a collage. Think about what sort of composition might enhance your message and perhaps even try interweaving individual images to create new connections. Find an evocative title for your work and display it in the classroom or another space at school.



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Howard Kottler
Peacemakers, 1967
Porcelain
H. 1 in. (2.5 cm), diam. 10. in. (26 cm)
Museum of Arts and Design,
Gift of Maren Monsen, 1996



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*The 1960's was an unbelievable period in American life. No one can imagine the full extent of the social forces of change at work during this time without living it. On my trips to San Francisco, I experienced the full bloom of hippie life. The Vietnam war, with all its social unrest, had powerful ramifications throughout the U.S.A. in daily life and in academia.*¹⁹

Howard Kottler

LOOK :

- What sort of object is this?
- How is it decorated? Please make a list of all the things you see.
- Do the colors correspond with the original colors of the depicted objects?
- Why do you think the artist chose these colors?
- In what way is the design on the plate decorative? In what way is it narrative? What is the story it tells?
- What is the relationship between words and images?
- How does this contribute to the overall message?
- Do you consider this a work of art? Would you use it as a plate and eat food off of it?

THINK ABOUT :

Howard Kottler, part of the **Funk** Art movement, rejected studio pottery practices, which emphasized the value of hand-made objects and took inspiration from **ceramic** history and tradition. Kottler added a contemporary spin to **ceramics** by combining narrative elements and references to popular culture with a sense of social responsibility and political commentary.

- “Peacemakers” was made at the height of the Vietnam War. What position does the work take towards the war?
- Irony, humor, wit play a large role in Kottler’s work. Please discuss.

DISCUSS :

Decals, printed decorations used on ceramic products, have long been used as a way to speed up and systematize production. Mostly associated with inexpensive, mass-

¹⁹ <http://www.theclaystudio.org/exhibitions/kottler.php>



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produced objects, **decals** were frowned upon by the crafts community. To this day, **decals** are extremely popular in the souvenir industry. Printed on plates or shot

glasses, images of iconic buildings or landscapes help tourists commemorate their visit to a certain place, thus forging associations between place and image.

- When first working with **decals**, Howard Kottler would transfer prefabricated images onto plates which he had fabricated by hand. Why do you think he abandoned this idea and used commercially produced blank porcelain plates as a print surface instead?
- Kottler is interested in the way recognizable pictures (famous paintings or buildings, the American flag, etc.) are imbued with values and meanings that go beyond what is directly visible. What are some of the associations you have when looking at an image of the Capitol or a Colt handgun (one of which was actually called “Peacemaker” by the manufacturer)?
- How does Kottler extend or play with these familiar meanings to further his message?
- How is this work similar to Michael Frimkess’ work *Things Ain’t What They Used To Be*, 1965?

COMPARE :

By using prefabricated **decals** for the decoration of his plate, Kottler creates a collage of sorts. Like Robert Rauschenberg’s “Signs”, “Peacemakers” communicates the artist’s attitude towards the political events of the time. Please compare and contrast the two works.



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William Clark
Police State Badge, 1969
Sterling silver and 14-karat gold
27/8 x 215/16 x 315/16 in. (7.3 x 7.5 x 10 cm)
Courtesy of Velvet da Vinci Gallery, San Francisco, CA



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Many pieces stem from a social or political consciousness. Clark carries the ideas over superbly through technical skill with materials, choice of appropriate common symbols -- which in some instances are words -- and a sense of humor. ²⁰ Penny Smith in Artweek, November 24, 1973

LOOK :

- What are the different components of this object?
- What is its overall shape?
- What role does text play in the work?
- What do you think the object is made of?
- How can it be used?
- What message would be communicated by someone wearing this badge?
- Who might be wearing it?

THINK ABOUT :

Jewelry in its traditional sense is intended to adorn the human body. However, it is also a powerful way to express values, beliefs, status, and power.

- Have you ever worn a badge or medal? Why? How did it make you feel?
- Think of some other instances, historical or contemporary, in which people wear badges, medals or another sort of ornament. What are some of the meanings communicated in each case?

DISCUSS :

William Clark began to work as a jewelry designer after moving to California in the 1960s, at the height of the nationwide protest movement against the Vietnam War. Working with recognizable symbols and in a wide range of materials (including plastic tubing, plumbing hardware, wood, glass, organic material, stone), Clark designed provocative pieces with political messages, thus challenging the traditional boundaries of jewelry.

- What particular sort of badge does William Clark refer to in his “Police State Badge?”
- Why do you think he is drawing this parallel?
- Why do you think Clark decided to use silver and gold, precious metals commonly associated with jewelry?

²⁰ <http://www.velvetdavinci.com/show.php?sid=48>



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- Do you think the work is persuasive as a political commentary? Why? Why not?

D O :

Divide the class into groups of approximately 4-5 students each. Each group will choose a social or political topic they find important. Imagine you are going to stage a protest or demonstration and think about a way to persuade your audience by using some sort of visual aid. What would it look like? You can design signs, badges, t-shirts, or something more elaborate, like costumes or masks, based on the time and resources available. Each group will present their work to the class and review the impact of each other's work: Did the group catch your attention? Did they make their point clear? Did they present an argument that was visually arresting and persuasive?

C O M P A R E :

Like Howard Kottler, Clark's expression of anti-governmental political views was fueled by the countercultural protest movements of the late 1960s, which were particularly strong on the West Coast. Compare and contrast the work of both artists. Pay particular attention of how they use familiar images and symbols by challenging and subverting their traditional meanings.



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Helena Hernmarck
Talking Trudeau -Nixon
[PART 1: Tapestry Triptych (left section)], 1969
Wool, nylon, and linen
51 x 42 in. (129.5 x 106.7 cm)
Museum of Arts and Design, Gift of the artist , 1990



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I want to do work that is true to the medium. I think about how I want a tapestry to feel. Aside from the pictorial image, I want the textile itself to have a life and texture of its own.
Helena Hernmarck

LOOK :

Take a close look at this artwork and describe it in as much detail as possible.

- Whom or what does it **represent**?
- Describe everything you notice about this person: dress, expression, what is he doing?
- What colors do you notice?
- Why do you think the artist chose these colors?
- What material did the artist use to make it? What visual evidence supports your opinion?
- While the image is of a woven tapestry, does the look evoke another medium? If yes, which one? Why?

THINK ABOUT :

The image above is a photograph of a tapestry woven by Swedish-born textile artist Helena Hernmarck. At a time when textiles featured mostly **abstract** designs that revealed the process of weaving, Hernmarck perfected a complicated weaving technique that allowed her to render figurative images with photorealistic accuracy.

- Some of Hernmarck's contemporaries might have argued that using fiber as if it was paint to **represent** detailed images as a dishonest use of materials. Helmarck, however, said that she wants to "do work that is true to the medium." What do you think she meant by this statement and which position do you agree with?
- Why do you think Helmarck is interested in weaving pictures rather than patterns?
- Compare photography and tapestry as visual media. In what way are they similar? How are they different?
- What do you think is the appeal of Hernmarck's works to her many corporate and institutional clients who commissioned pictorial tapestries to adorn their lobbies or other architectural spaces?



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DISCUSS:

This portrait of Richard Nixon (US president from 1969-74) was originally conceived as the left third of a tapestry. On the right side of the 12-foot-long panel was the portrait of Pierre Trudeau, Nixon's charismatic, highly popular, and progressive Canadian counterpart. The middle section was taken up by the portrait of a young boy facing the viewer.

- What do you think Helnmarck wanted to say by positioning the face of a child between the two talking politicians?

In 1986, years after finishing the work, the artist said that she had changed her “attitude towards art and heavy messages”²¹ and chose to remove and separately exhibit the portrait of the boy.

- Discuss the artist's original intent and subsequent decision to separate the three panels.
- Given this background story, do you think the Nixon portrait, seen on its own, is still engaging and relevant? Please explain your position.

²¹http://collections.madmuseum.org/code/emuseum.asp?emu_action=searchrequest&moduleid=1&profile=objects¤trecord=1&style=single&rawsearch=id/,/is/,/529/,/false/,/true



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Willis "Bing" Davis
Ghetto Voice in Orange, 1967.
Stoneware. 10 x 5 x 5 in. (25.4 x 12.7 x 12.7 cm)
National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center.



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In terms of subject matter, I address myself to the unlimited resource of possibilities of my existence. The conscious inclusion of social commentary in my works is the first step toward speaking to a universal condition. The rich artistic heritage of African art with its religious, social and magical substance is what I select as an aesthetic and historical link.²²

Willis Bing Davis

LOOK :

Please take a good look at this object and describe what you see.

- List all the things you notice about it, including color, texture, material, and composition.
- What do you think it **represents**?
- Do you think it is intended to be used as a **functional** object? Why? Why not?

THINK ABOUT :

Artist and teacher Willis “Bing” Davis is interested in creating works with social and political messages firmly rooted in the historical moment and the urban environment they grew out of.

- The artist entitled this sculpture “Ghetto Voices in Orange.” What is your reaction to this title? In what way is Davis literally giving voice to the figure he created?

DISCUSS :

“Ghetto Voice” was created in the context of increasing segregation, racism, and the misuse of police power in the urban centers of the northern US, many of which erupted in race riots in the late 1960s. As a result, many whites moved out of the city centers into the suburbs, increasing racial tensions and turning inner city areas into ghettos.

- Davis captures the idea of the ghetto by representing a man behind bars. What are some parallels/connections Davis is drawing between life in an urban ghetto and life incarcerated?

²² <http://www.360ipt.com/Artists/DavisBing.htm>



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DO:

Write a short narrative from the perspective of the man depicted in the work. Think about a style of writing/speaking that would best reflect the „voice“ of this person and use it to make your monologue evocative and lively.



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Bonnie MacLean
Bill Graham Presents: Butterfield Blues Band, July 11–16, 1967
Offset lithograph poster
21 x 14 in. (53.3 x 35.6 cm)
The Globus Collection



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LOOK :

- In one sentence, summarize what you see in this image.
- Take apart this first impression and describe what else you notice, in as much details as possible.
- What colors do you notice?
- What sorts of recognizable objects do you see and how are they integrated into the whole?
- In what way are **abstract** and organic shapes used by the artist?
- What can you say about the role of text in the work (note the font, composition, and content)?
- What is the purpose or practical **function** of this work?

THINK ABOUT :

Graphic artist Bonnie MacLean designed this poster, which advertises a concert at the Fillmore, a legendary music venue in San Francisco.

- Based on the image, what sort of music would you expect to hear at the advertised concert? Please explain.
- Who do you think is the target audience? Why?

DISCUSS :

Bonnie MacLean is one of several 1960s artists who shaped psychedelic art. Her husband, Bill Graham was an influential music impresario who, during his time at the Fillmore, promoted many rock concerts, but also theater and poetry events featuring some of the most iconic representatives of hippie-era counterculture such as Jefferson Airplane, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, the Grateful Dead, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Allen Ginsberg.

- What do you think inspired the visual language of this work?
- What about it appealed to people who saw it in the 1960s?
- Based on this poster, can you imagine what psychedelic means?



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COMPARE :

Crafting Modernism features a number of other Fillmore posters created by Bonnie MacLean's colleagues. Look at the two examples below and compare and contrast them with MacLean's Butterfield Blues Band announcement.

DO :

Design a poster for a real or fictional event at your school. Using poster paint or watercolors, use the entire surface of an 11x17 sheet of paper. Think about what you are announcing, your target audience, and any promotional message you intend to send. What sort of imagery, text style, and composition will best communicate your ideas? Try to integrate your text into the fabric of the poster.



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GLOSSARY

ABSTRACT: Visual language of form, color and line that exists independently from observable reality.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM: Post WW II art movement centered in New York. Abstract expressionists used abstract, gestural paintings to express inner emotions.

CERAMIC: Pottery; clay that was shaped by hand or cast into a shape and then fired (heated in an oven called “kiln”). One of the oldest art forms and one of traditional craft media.

CONCEPTUAL ART: Art movement that emerged in the 1960s in which the idea presented by the artist is considered more important than the finished product

DECAL: Decorative image that is transferred onto metal, glass, or ceramics with the help of a specially prepared paper.

FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR: Participant in a study-abroad scholarship program.

FUNK ART: American art movement in the 1960 and 70s that grew out of the California ceramics scene and drew inspiration from popular culture. Characterized by a use of unusual materials and technique, an interest in narrative, and a renewed sense of social responsibility, Funk Art was a rebellion against Abstract Expressionism as the dominant force in the art world of the time.

FUNCTIONAL: Something that can be used for a practical purpose.

FORMICA: A trademark used for a variety of high-pressure laminated plastic sheets of synthetic resin employed especially as a heat-resistant and chemical-resistant surface on tables and counters.

MOBILE: A type of sculpture consisting of carefully equilibrated parts that move, especially in response to air currents.

MINIMALISM: Art movement emerging in 1960s New York, which used simple, geometric forms, not as a means of personal expression or metaphors for something else but stressed the importance of surface, repetition, and industrial materials.

MODERNISM: The deliberate departure from tradition and the use of innovative forms of expression that distinguish many styles in the arts of the 20th century.

MU: Mystical concept of nothingness in Zen Buddhism.

NARRATIVE: a story or the act of telling a story



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NON-OBJECTIVE: Abstract, not representing an object, the opposite of figurative.

PLYWOOD: A structural material made of layers of wood glued together, usually with the grains of adjoining layers at right angles to each other.

POP ART: Modern Art movement in the 1950s and 60s, that imitated the methods, styles, and themes of popular culture and mass media, such as comic strips and advertising.

REPRESENTATION: In art, something that is recognizable as a figure, object, or place in real life.

TEXTILE: Fabric, cloth; flexible material consisting of a network of natural or artificial fibers often referred to as thread or yarn

ZEN: Branch of the Buddhist religion that focuses on meditation and self-contemplation.



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www.gottliebfoundation.org

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www.voulkos.com



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