

MINGEI

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM

IN THE REALM OF NATURE

Bob Stocksdale and Kay Sekimachi

On View September 14, 2014–March 15, 2015
www.mingei.org/exhibition/in-the-realm-of-nature/



This exhibition features the work of textile artist Kay Sekimachi and her late husband, woodturner Bob Stocksdale. For this lesson we will focus on the work of Kay Sekimachi, whose complex woven structures are created both on and off a traditional loom. Throughout her sixty-year career, she has constructed unique works of art using natural materials, such as skeleton-like leaves, hornet’s nest paper, and grass. This exhibition includes examples of her translucent sculptural hangings and room dividers, along with other woven forms—accordion-formatted books, vibrant scrolls, seamless nesting boxes, and jewelry.

SCHEDULE YOUR VISIT TO MINGEI INTERNATIONAL

This lesson plan was created in conjunction with the Museum's current exhibition **IN THE REALM OF NATURE – Bob Stocksdale and Kay Sekimachi**, and is a great pre or post visit tool to use in your classroom. Use the instructions below to schedule a tour and prepare your students for their time at the Museum.

- ✓ Schedule a Museum visit and Docent-led tour through the Education Department. Mingei offers **free** admission for all K-12th grade and college groups and transportation reimbursements for Title 1 schools.
 - Email: sfoley@mingei.org
 - Call: 619-704-7495
 - Complete an online tour request form: www.mingei.org/education/museum-tour-request
- ✓ Review the information in this guide with your students; build their knowledge, excitement and confidence before they arrive.
- ✓ Discuss museum etiquette and review the Tour Guidelines document that will be sent to you when your tour is confirmed.
- ✓ Explain to students that a Museum Docent will guide them through the exhibition. Explain that a Docent is a knowledgeable Museum-trained volunteer who will share valuable information with them.
- ✓ Explain that Mingei International is a museum of folk art, craft and design that shows work from all over the world, and that “*mingei*” is a Japanese word that means “art of the people.”



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY

Modifiable to grade level, to be done either before or after your visit

Function, Fiber Art and Nature

Using the Museum's current exhibition **IN THE REALM OF NATURE** as inspiration, students will learn from the work of fiber artist Kay Sekimachi and then create their own fiber bowls using natural materials and museum objects for inspiration.

Objectives

- Student will work collaboratively to identify and sort organic materials.
- Students will compare and contrast characteristics of different natural materials.
- Students will use tools to explore and test characteristics of different materials.
- Students will create an original work of art using natural materials, based on the work of fiber artist Kay Sekimachi.

Materials

- Natural materials (flowers, grass, sticks, leaves)
- Glue
- Water
- Cup or bowl
- Plastic wrap
- Tray (optional)

Vocabulary

Category—a collection of things that share a trait

Fiber—a long natural or synthetic material, such as wool, cotton, or rayon, which is capable of being spun into yarn

Loom—a frame or machine used for weaving yarn or thread into fabric

Natural Materials—materials found in nature, such as flowers, grass, sticks, or leaves

Textile—any cloth or material made of fibers, yarn, or fabric

Transparency—the degree to which one can see through any given object

Weaving—a process of interlacing strands of fabric, such as wool or cotton

Warm Up/Discussion—Material Inquiry

- Lead your class in an exploration of organic materials.
- Focus on how to group and describe the materials and their various properties. For example:
 - The petals of a sunflower are pointed, while the petals of a rose are rounded.
 - A just-mowed lawn of grass is often smooth and soft, while a field of straw is coarse and scratchy.
 - Leaves that fell off a tree a long time ago are dry and rough, while a leaf still attached to a tree is green and soft.
 - Some sticks snap clean in half without much effort, while others are softer and more difficult to break.
- Take students on a nature walk around campus, or in Balboa Park, to gather natural materials. Collect a variety of organic materials (flowers, grass, sticks, leaves), and add any other materials that you can find.
- Ask students to group the materials they found using categories that they can think of (for example: types of edges; round, jagged, twisted, softness, flexibility, weight, transparency).
- Invite small groups to share.
 - Make a list of the categories that the students came up with; how many categories did the class as a whole come up with?
 - Use tools such as a flashlight, natural light, or a table fan to test categories. For example:
 - Use a table fan to test the weight of the different materials. Does one blow away while the other stays put?
 - Use a flashlight to shine light through the materials to test the transparency. Can you see the light through it? What about if you hold it up to the sun to test with natural light?

ACTIVITY—Homemade Paper or Sculptural Bowl

Students will create either flat paper or a bowl using the natural materials that they have collected. When considering which project to present with students, keep in mind that the bowl requires more control and manual dexterity to form the fiber materials over the round surface, so younger students may find more success with the flat surface.



Preparation: Explore the work of Kay Sekimachi. Show students examples of Kay Sekimachi's work, or ask them to recall what they remember seeing at the Museum. Prompt dialogue on the work by asking students to respond to some of the following questions:

- What is the first thing you notice about this object? *Ask them to cite evidence that they can point to on the work.*
- What materials do you think the artist might have used to create these works?
- Why do you think the artist chose to use the materials that she did?
- How do you think these pieces might have been created?
- Do you think these objects were created to serve a functional purpose (that is, an item to wear, an item to eat out of, etc.), or were they made simply to be looked at?

Instructions:

1



Gather your materials: glue, water, bowl form (if making a bowl shape), plastic wrap, natural materials (flowers, grass, sticks, leaves).

2



Mix together a little Elmer's Glue and water.

3



Cover a workspace or tray with plastic wrap.

4



If creating a flat piece of paper, layer your materials on a piece of plastic wrap. Dip the material in the glue mixture and place on your covered surface.

5



If using a bowl form, cover it with plastic wrap so it doesn't permanently stick.

6



Dip materials in glue mixture and cover bowl form. Be sure that glue is spread beneath and below materials.

7



Continue gluing materials until the plastic wrap or bowl form is completely covered. Let dry overnight.

8



Once dry, carefully peel plastic wrap and materials from materials or bowl.

9



Finished product!

Post-Activity Discussion—Transparency Hypothesis

- After students have created their fiber bowl or paper and it is time to let it dry, ask them to guess how transparent they imagine it will turn out. For example:
 - Do you think you'll be able to see light through it in the classroom?
 - Do you think you could see the sun through it if you held it up outside?
 - What is different about the light inside versus the light outside?
 - Do you think if you were to hold it over your face, you could see anything?
 - What materials do you think are the most transparent?
- Have them take a look at a classmate's work and make the same hypothesis.
- Once the project dries, use flashlights to check their hypothesis against the item they compared it to.
 - Did your hypothesis ring true?
 - How much light can you see?
 - Are there any parts of your work that aren't see-through at all (that are opaque)?
 - Do you think you can see through Kay Sekimachi's pieces with a flashlight?

Post-Activity Critique and Revision

- Ask student to participate in a Gallery Walk, allowing them to view and comment on each other's work. Display the completed artworks around the room and guide students to each piece (or hold up pieces for them to see). Lead a group discussion and instruct students to offer positive comments on each work. Focus the discussion on some of the ideas discussed in the warm-up, including materials, transparency, and categories.
- That can be the end of the activity, or you can offer students the opportunity to create another piece using comments and feedback that they experienced as part of the critique.

CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARD ALIGNED

VISUAL ARTS

KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 2

- Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, and shape/form.
- Demonstrate beginning skill in the use of tools and processes, such as the use of scissors, glue, and paper in creating a three-dimensional construction.
- Create a three-dimensional form.
- Describe what is seen in selected works of art.
- Perceive and describe repetition and balance in nature, in the environment, and in works of art.

GRADES 3 – 5

- Compare and contrast two works of art made by the use of different art tools and media (e.g., watercolor, tempera, computer).
- Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, texture, space, and value.
- Identify and describe how a person’s own cultural context influences individual responses to works of art.
- Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art.
- Identify and describe various fine, traditional, and folk arts from historical periods worldwide.

GRADES 6 – 8

- Identify and describe the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, (color, shape/form, line, texture, space, and value).
- Describe the environment and selected works of art, using the elements of art and the principles of design.
- Analyze the form (how a work of art looks) and content (what a work of art communicates).
- Identify professions in or related to the visual arts and some of the specific skills needed for those professions.
- Construct an interpretation of a work of art based on the form and content of the work.
- Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about visual aspects in the environment and in works of art, including their own.

GRADES 9 – 12

- Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the various skills of an artist.

COMMON CORE STANDARD ALIGNED

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

GRADES K - 1

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten and grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.
- Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

GRADES 2 – 3

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 or 3 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.
- Effectively engage with a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 or 4 topics, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

GRADES 6 – 8

- Effectively engage with a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6, 7 or 8 topics, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Interpret or analyze information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

GRADES 9 – 10

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

GRADES 11 – 12

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

WEB RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

IN THE REALM OF NATURE, exhibition page

www.mingei.org/exhibition/in-the-realm-of-nature/

San Diego based nonprofit that offers arts educators recycled materials

www.reinterpret.org

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Kay Sekimachi Biography

<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artist/?id=4363>

Los Angeles County Museum of Art – Kay Sekimachi: California Design Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jK1fHlmTEg>

American Craft Magazine, October/November 2010

<http://craftcouncil.org/magazine/article/weaving-sea>

IMAGE GUIDE

Page 1

Kay Sekimachi. *Katsura*, 1971. Black nylon monofilament: 4-layered and tubular weaves. Collection of Grace Ulp. Photo by Photo by M. Lee Fatherree

Kay Sekimachi, *Asian Willow*, 1998, skeleton leaves, paper, watercolor, wallpaper paste, Krylon. Collection of Forrest L. Merrill. Photo by M. Lee Fatherree

Kay Sekimachi, *White Necklace with Limpets*, 2009. Linen and shells: cardwoven seamless tube. Collection of Forrest L. Merrill. Photo by Richard Matzinger