



CRAFT IN AMERICA

EDUCATION GUIDE

Chloe Darke: Function and Expression in Metalsmithing



"It sort of amazed me that you can take this technology that's been around thousands of years and make functional work... or conceptual art."

- Chloe Darke

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will explore the work of metalsmith Chloe Darke, who produces silverware in traditional patterns for the company Old Newbury Crafters. Additionally, in her own studio work Darke creates expressive vessels she describes as "objects of empowerment," and these reference the female form. In this lesson, students will compare and contrast the functions of Chloe Darke's tableware with her vessels, through a class debate arguing the value of each form—the utilitarian traditional silverware and the expressive contemporary vessels. Additionally, students will sketch a design for their choice of a utilitarian, historically based metal object, or a contemporary vessel with symbolic meaning.

Grade Level: 9-12

Estimated Time: Three 45-minute class periods of research, discussion and design

Craft In America Theme/Episode: *FORGE*

Background Information

Chloe Darke, at twenty-two, is of the generation fueling the DIY movement, hungry to explore and savor the act of "making", driven to create. Having studied metalsmithing and jewelry at Maine College of Art, she now produces fine sterling place settings for Old Newbury Crafters in Amesbury, MA, a four hundred year old studio producing hand wrought silver. Chloe is a perfect example of an art student who has utilized her education for her livelihood, an accomplishment that relates directly to her talent and determination. Her daily work reinforces and informs her personal work which centers on the female form and aesthetic.



Key Concepts

- Traditional crafts can provide a feeling of connection with the past.
- Contemporary crafts can inspire new ways of seeing.
- Evidence that an object was hand made, including its imperfections and variations, often times makes the object more valuable to viewers and collectors.
- Crafts can provide the means for making a political statement.

Critical Questions

- How do Chloe Darke's silverware creations provide a connection with the past?
- Why are hammer marks and variations in Chloe Darke's silverware valued by collectors?
- How can Chloe Darke's vessels inspire new ways of seeing?
- How do Chloe Darke's vessels function as political works?

Objectives

Students will:

- Compare and contrast the functions of Chloe Darke's tableware with her vessels.
- Craft a statement about the perceived value of handmade objects.
- Analyze Chloe Darke's explanation of her vessels.
- Sketch a design for a utilitarian, historically based metal object, or a contemporary vessel with symbolic meaning, and complete the sketch with a maker's mark.

Vocabulary

Aesthetic, functional, value, maker's mark, sterling, forge.

Interdisciplinary Connection

History/Social Studies: Locating women who were silversmiths in history is a potential area of research. One stop for the search is the short biography of Hester Bateman at the National Museum of Women in the Arts at www.nmwa.org/explore/artist-profiles/hester-bateman. Sybil Ludington is a lesser-known teenaged counterpart to silversmith Paul Revere (who is mentioned in the video.) Students can read about Sybil's courageous ride, and the metal sculptor Anna Wyatt Huntington who created a statue of Sybil, in their respective Wikipedia listings.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sybil_Ludington

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Hyatt_Huntington

Technology Education: If your school is fortunate enough to have a metal shop, an introduction to forging is an appropriate extension of the examination of Chloe Darke's work. Also, Darke may inspire students (especially girls) to try metalsmithing.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard:

3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.
4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

Resources and Materials for Teaching

Resources

- Craft in America DVD, *FORGE*. Also viewable online at www.craftinamerica.org/episodes/forge
- Craft in America website, www.craftinamerica.org
- Old Newbury Crafters website displays their products as well as historic content, patterns, and the list of maker's marks seen in the video, www.silvercrafters.com
- Chloe Darke's studio work can be seen at her website, www.chloedarke.com
- The Silver Institute Website has copious information about silver, including its element characteristics, uses in art, industry, and the home, and its history, www.silverinstitute.org
- Steel Girl is a site dedicated "to the outstanding female metal artists of our time": www.steelgirl.com/steel_girls.htm

Worksheets

- *The Function of Tradition*
- *The Function of Innovation*

Materials

- An array of printed images of Darke's studio work, of Old Newbury Crafters products, and of works from the other artists, past and present, including Anna Wyatt Huntington, Donna D'Aquino, Susie Ganch, Jesse Monongya, El Anatsui, The Steel Girls.
- Access to online resources for research
- Drawing paper
- Pencils, erasers, rulers, and other drawing tools



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

*"I thought, yeah, it is special to be a female silversmith; metalsmith. It's always sort of been a male-dominated environment."
- Chloe Darke*

Chloe Darke's work lends itself to thinking about the value of different kinds of art, in this case, utilitarian silverware recreated in traditional patterns, and contemporary sculptural vessels that evoke an aesthetic response— a sense of beauty in the female form – yet contain a somewhat political message. Students will have the opportunity, through a class exploration and debate, to decide the value of these works to themselves as individuals and more generally to the larger society we live in.

Before Viewing

Share the quote at the beginning of the lesson (repeated here) with students:

"It sort of amazed me that you can take this technology that's been around thousands of years and make functional work... or conceptual art."

"I thought, yeah, it is special to be a female silversmith; metalsmith. It's always sort of been a male-dominated environment."

Ask students what they think they might see in the video. What questions do they have before viewing? Questions may be written down to note afterwards if they are answered within the video. View the segment on Chloe Darke in *FORGE* on the Craft in America DVD or online at www.craftinamerica.org/shorts/chloe-darke-and-old-newbury-crafters-segment

After Viewing

Begin a discussion of Darke's work by asking for student reactions.

- What do they think about everything they have seen?
- What do they think about Darke's work? Emphasize the two categories of work that Darke creates: her silverware for Old Newbury Crafters, and her own studio work, particularly the vessels which reference female forms. Check if the questions students asked were answered in the video.

Take some time to examine the vocabulary words by having students look them up on shared phones or computers, if available. In particular, discuss the complex meanings of aesthetics, function/functional, and the many meanings of value.

Approaching aesthetics as a discipline in which people address philosophical questions, consider the following:

- How do people decide what is beautiful?
- What meanings does functional have?
- Can people be functional, or just objects?
- Can non-functional objects; that is objects that do not have an obvious, specific use or purpose, actually have or perform a function?
- What are some ways we may value something or someone? Monetarily? (for example: It's worth money.) Symbolically? (for example: It has a meaning that seems important.) Emotionally? (for example: Love, joy, or compassion may be involved.) Functionally? (for example: It helps us do something or has a purpose. It enlightens through a new idea.)

Look at images of work by other artists (listed above in Resources and Materials) and discuss with students which ones they think are traditional, functional, contemporary, aesthetic/beautiful, symbolic, political, and valuable. Note that students may reasonably argue that the artworks “fit” in more than one of these categories.

Tell students that they will eventually make a design in sketch form, for either a utilitarian, historically based metal object, or a contemporary vessel with symbolic meaning. They will also design a maker’s mark, and display their sketches in a showcase or bulletin board, presenting their designs to the school as their public audience. The sketch will be accompanied by a designer’s/artist’s statement. Students can think about their ideas as discussion proceeds. Next, students develop an argument about Darke’s work.

Worksheet: The Function of Tradition

Worksheet: The Function of Innovation

(one 45-minute class period)

The worksheets are designed to facilitate a class discussion; an informal debate about functional and traditional craft compared to contemporary and symbolic craft. Tell students they will be arguing for the value of one form of Chloe Darke’s artwork over the other: the value for themselves, and the value for society. It may be useful to allow students to choose which group for which they will argue based on which artworks appeal to them. Divide the students into two groups and give each the appropriate work sheet. Students then work together on the sheets, reading, answering the questions, and taking notes. After sheets are completed, the class may regroup to hear arguments from each side. Explain that there need not be a “winner” (although students may decide that it does) and that philosophical ideas often remain open for discussion and debate. Some students may wish to form a new group that recognizes the value of both approaches to art. Recognizing that classes differ, if the discussion is lively, you may want it to continue into another class period. If students are quieter, it may work better for them to work on an argument in small groups or alone, without debate– the debate then “takes place” through their artist’s statements accompanying their publicly displayed sketches. After debating, have the students share their answers to any worksheet questions that may not have been discussed, so that each group is familiar with the content of the other’s worksheet.



Studio Production

(one 45-minute class period)

Students practiced making an argument in favor of one form of Chloe Darke's art over another; or perhaps they decided they like both forms. Now they can put their arguments and ideas into practice by creating their own design sketch inspired by Chloe Darke's work. During studio time, students will create a finished sketch of either a utilitarian, historically based metal object, or a contemporary vessel with symbolic meaning. Have copies of the Maker's marks from the Old Newbury Crafters website available so students may view them as inspiration for their own maker's mark. Students can then "sign" their sketch with their maker's mark. After the discussion about Darke's work, students likely found an affinity with one or the other. Or they may want to create a design that features a hybrid of traditional, functional, symbolic, political, or any combination of characteristics.

Students can explore traditional metal work including tableware, weathervanes, wrought iron, tools, vehicles, and toys. The prints of artists' work as well as internet searches are useful as sources for historic design and patterns, and for examples of contemporary art and vessels. Vessels have great potential for representing symbolism; besides Darke's female symbolism, encourage students to find other potential uses and meanings of vessels. Students may refer to their worksheet notes to focus their ideas, and to help craft their own artist's statements explaining their work. Students may wish to continue to work in the groups on designing, sketching, and crafting their artist's statements. Let students know that their statements, written legibly on the sketch or an accompanying label, should demonstrate their understanding of the kinds of artwork discussed, their own perception of form, function, and value regarding the artwork discussed, and specific reasons for their preferences. They should also include an explanation of their maker's mark.

Robert H. Bean		James F. Harvey		Danny C. Rogers	
Geoffrey T. Blake		John A. Karambelas		Roger R. Rowell	
Fletcher S. Carter (Holloware only)		Henry W. Kruschwitz		Reynolds F. Senior	
Chester A. Dow		Robert H. Lapham		George R. Woundy	
George F. Gillman		Gayden F. Marshall		Chloe Darke	
		Daniel S. Morrill			



CLOSING STRATEGIES

Reflection

Student reflection on the concepts discussed in the video, the discussion, and the class debate are represented in their sketch and artist's statement. Circulate as students work, checking for understanding. Encourage students to question each other's assertions. Student sketches can be displayed in a showcase or on a bulletin board.

Assessment

By examining the worksheets, the student's artwork and artist's statements, and in discussions with the student throughout the lesson, it should be evident that the student can:

- Compare and contrast the functions of Chloe Darke's tableware with her vessels.
- Craft a statement about the perceived value of handmade objects.
- Analyze Chloe Darke's explanation of her vessels.
- Sketch a design for a utilitarian, historically based metal object, or a contemporary vessel with symbolic meaning, and complete the sketch with a maker's mark.

Extensions

Metal Artists: Students may examine the work of the following artists on the Craft In America website. These artists may be examined during the worksheet portion of the lesson as well. There are short biographies on the site, and the artist's personal sites are linked: www.craftinamerica.org/artists-material

- Donna D'Aquino makes jewelry in metal; some of her jewelry is designed to also work as a wall sculpture: www.craftinamerica.org/artists/donna-daquino
- Susie Ganch creates jewelry and works in the Radical Jewelry Makeover collective, a group dedicated to "mining" and then recycling old jewelry as a sustainable practice: www.craftinamerica.org/artists/susie-ganch & www.ethicalmetalsmiths.org/projects/radical-jewelry-makeover
- Jesse Monongya crafts jewelry that he describes as "contemporary and at the same time very spiritual": www.craftinamerica.org/artists/jesse-monongya

Optional extension: Studio production/Working with metal

"The reason why I like this process is because it is so physical that you're using almost your whole body, almost like you're pouring all of your life energy into this one piece."

Students may want to try working with metal. Aluminum, in the form of empty food and drink cans, is an affordable metal, easily manipulated, with which students can experiment. The cans are easily cut with scissors. Provide gloves for hand protection. To make a flat piece of aluminum, pierce can near the top, and cut off the top and bottom. Slice can down the side of the cylinder to make a rectangle of metal. The edges may be easily folded. Create a narrow fold on edge to reduce contact with sharp edges. The metal is easy to pierce, emboss, hammer, crease, and link with staples, duct tape, or wires. For additional inspiration in experimenting with scrap aluminum, see the work of El Anatsui, africa.si.edu/exhibits/gawu/artworks.html.

Authors

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Worksheet: The Function of Tradition

Read the quotes and then answer the questions. Develop your argument for the value to society of functional, historically inspired craft (Chloe Darke's silverware) over contemporary, symbolic craft (Chloe Darke's vessels.) Use quotes to strengthen your argument. Which quotes suit your argument best? Some may work for either side of the argument. As a group, decide on your strongest points, considering those facets for which you can most strongly argue as valuable to society. Get ready to debate!

"It sort of amazed me that you can take this technology that's been around thousands of years and make functional work like we do, or conceptual art." – Chloe Darke

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"I think there's such a rebirth of craft with people from my generation. We're really interested in traditional ways of making things." – Chloe Darke

"In my own personal studio work I'm focusing more on aesthetics. It's about expressing an idea and sort of getting that idea out there in a form that maybe people aren't used to, and make something that is utilitarian but approach it in a way that from a day to day basis it wouldn't be interacted with." – Chloe Darke

"I was really interested in different gender roles, what it means to sort of own your body, and owning your sexuality. Vessels are really perfect for that because it's a really old metaphor for the body– the vessel– because they contain things just like we do; if you're a woman... you might have a child, and during that time it's like you're containing, you're this sacred vessel containing a new life inside of you. I just wanted to make them objects of empowerment, and saying "Yes, I own myself, this is who I am and I'm not ashamed of that." – Chloe Darke

"It's hard to have just one reason why I really love this ancient craft. There are just so many reasons to love it because it's so old and it's almost like I'm continuing a legacy of different metalsmiths and female smiths of the past, and maybe someday I'll pass this down to somebody else so it's almost like your own little legacy that you're contributing to." – Chloe Darke

"If Mr. Revere could come back in this day and age, I and my colleagues would be some of the few people he could really identify with." – Robert Lapham

"She is a marvelous, marvelous craftsperson." – Robert Lapham

"As you hammer the piece, it gets harder, to the point where you have to stop and re-soften the metal. When we are finished with the piece, it is quite hard. So it's going to be able to maintain its shape over years and years of usage... This stuff is built to last. It's good and strong because of that forging process." – Robert Lapham

"When they have dinner guests, oftentimes the silver becomes the main conversation at the dinner table. I think I now understand why. It's individuals making individual pieces." – Robert Lapham

"You can buy a stainless steel set, and you can have that stamped out anywhere. You can not have a handmade piece of silver made just anywhere." – Charlene Morin

Worksheet: The Function of Tradition continued

"It's very exciting to have a grandmother pass down her silver to her daughter; she passes it on to her daughter, and then her daughter passes it on to her daughter. It's amazing, the generations of silver." – Charlene Morin

"Every silversmith has their own maker's mark." – Charlene Morin

"Customers do ask for specific makers. They have a maker that they love and that's who they want to make it." – Charlene Morin

"My makers mark is called a tri-scillion...its actually an old Celtic symbol ...throughout the years it's meant different things to different people." – Chloe Darke

"There are little trademarks of my work that are in the pieces that I make. Perhaps a little subtle difference in the appearance of the bend." – Geoffrey T. Blake

"In Colonial times they made silver very smooth. They didn't like leaving hammer marks, it was sort of a sign of bad workmanship...until the early 60s ...a lot of the customers didn't believe it was handmade unless there were hammer mark sin it and so we started leaving some more of the subtle texturing in the silver." – Geoffrey T. Blake

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- In what ways do the speakers claim that traditional crafts can provide a feeling of connection with the past? Why is this valuable? How do Chloe Darke's silverware creations provide a connection with the past?
- Chloe Darke works with a fellow silversmith who is from a different generation. What value might this have for each of them? For society?
- How do the speakers show that evidence that an object was hand made, including hammer marks and signs of its maker, often makes the object more valuable to collectors? In what ways can this thinking be valuable to society?
- Blake states that in the 1960s, customer trends called for more handmade marks in silverware. What historical trends may have influenced this? What trends might be influencing the young people Chloe Darke says are interested in "traditional ways of making things"?
- Think about the words aesthetics, function, and value, and the different meanings they have. Can you use any of these words to strengthen your argument?

Worksheet: The Function of Innovation

Read the quotes and then answer the questions. Develop your argument for the value to society of contemporary, symbolic craft (Chloe Darke's vessels) over functional, traditionally based craft (Chloe Darke's silverware.) Use quotes to strengthen your argument. Which quotes suit your argument best? Some may work for either side of the argument. As a group, decide on your strongest points: which facets can you most strongly argue are valuable to society? Get ready to debate!

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- When Darke says, " I own myself, this is who I am and I'm not ashamed of that" she implies that someone is expecting her to feel ashamed. What shame is she referring to? Do you think other females may also fight similar feelings of shame?
- How might Darke's vessels inspire new ways of seeing?
- In what way could Darke's vessels be political? Can this be considered a function? If so, is this an important function?
- Chloe Darke disrupts certain traditions, while appreciating silversmithing traditions. She got a job in a male-dominated field. She creates art that pushes the idea that female body parts are beautiful rather than shameful. How are Darke's disruptions valuable to society?
- Think about the words aesthetics, function, and value, and the different meanings they have. Can you use any of these words to strengthen your argument?