

CRAFT IN AMERICA

landscape: personal connections



David Gurney, Tree of Life, Doug Hill Photograph

Preview

We all live and work within our own personal landscapes—surrounded by objects, ideas, beliefs and values that help shape our personal identities. Both Richard Notkin and Denise Wallace work from within their personal landscapes to share with others what they care about deeply. When craft artists use their art forms to reveal their passions and concerns, their objects are imbued with special meanings. As we view and use the objects they create, we are invited to not only appreciate their beauty and form, but also visit the landscapes from which these objects emerged.

Featured Artists

Richard Notkin (clay/Landscape)

Denise Wallace (jewelry/Community)

Related Artists

Hystercine Rankin (quilting/Community)

Einar and Jamex de la Torre (glass/Community)

Jan Yager (jewelry/Landscape)

personal connections

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education guide information

Craft in America, Inc.

Craft In America Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the exploration of craft in the United States and its impact on our nation's cultural heritage. The centerpiece of the company's efforts is the production of a nationally broadcast television documentary series celebrating American craft and the artists who bring it to life. The project currently includes a three-part television documentary series supported by CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions, a nationally touring exhibition of exceptional craft objects, as well as a companion book, and a comprehensive Web site. Carol Sauvion is the founder and director of Craft in America.

Craft in America Mission Statement

The mission of Craft in America is to document and advance original handcrafted work through programs in all media made accessible to all Americans.

Craft in America: The Series

Craft in America's nationally broadcast PBS documentary series seeks to celebrate craft by honoring the artists who create it. In three episodes entitled Memory, Landscape and Community, Craft in America television viewers will travel throughout the United States visiting America's premier craft artists in their studios to witness the creation of hand-made objects, and into the homes, businesses and public spaces where functional art is employed and celebrated. The primary objective of the series is to convey to a national audience the breadth and beauty of handmade objects in our culture.

Viewing the Series

Craft in America may be taped off the air and used for educational purposes at no cost for one year from the date of the first national broadcast—May 30, 2007. Check local PBS station listings as broadcast times may vary.



Ordering the DVD and Companion Book

For long-term viewing and in-classroom use, the Craft in America: The series enhanced format DVD may be purchased through PBS Video, 1-800-752-9727, or www.shoppbs.com/teachers

To order the companion book, CRAFT IN AMERICA Celebrating Two Centuries of Artists and Objects contact 1-800-424-7963 or www.shoppbs.com/teachers

Audience

Craft in America is produced for a public television audience. Companion Educator Guides written for teachers support each of the three episodes—Memory, Landscape and Community. These guides are intended primarily for use with middle and high school students; however, the content can be adapted for students of all ages and for use in other educational settings.

education guide information

Craft in America Educator Guides

Three Educator Guides have been designed to accompany Craft in America. Each guide—Memory, Landscape and Community—relate to and reflect the core ideas, artists, and art forms presented in the corresponding series episode. The themes presented in each guide allow additional entry points into the material found in the three episodes.

How to Use the Guides

The material presented in the three Craft in America Educator Guides is organized into thematic groupings and written to support middle and high school art education curricula. Teachers are encouraged to use the content as presented or to enhance and further their established programs of study. The guides can also be adapted for use in other subject areas. The primary purpose of the guides is to deepen students' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of craft in America.

Scope and Sequence

The three thematic Educator Guides—Memory, Landscape and Community—can be used in whatever sequence is appropriate. The guides can be used independently or sequentially. Time for each suggested activity will vary depending on the depth of inquiry.

Each theme within an Educator Guide features the following components:

Preview

A brief overview of the theme and related activities

Featured Artists

Each theme features two artists, one of whom is highlighted in the related episode

Related Artists

In addition to featured artists, each theme references at least two other artists whose work illustrates the theme

Background Information

An introduction to the theme, the featured artists, and their connection to the broader world of craft, intended for teacher use

Craft in Action

Provides questions for the teacher to use with students prior to and following viewing of the DVDs

Craft in the Classroom

Suggested activities for exploring and investigating key concepts and opportunities for art making and reflection

Worksheets

Support selected activities

The Educator Guides are designed to complement the series, but there are additional resources available on the Craft in America Web site that can be used by both teachers and students. It is recommended that teachers preview materials on the DVD and Web site prior to introducing the theme to students.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

“ I don't know that the [Helena, Montana] landscape really effects the work. I'm working out of a political landscape. ”

Richard Notkin



Jan Yager, Chicory Blossom Brooch, City Flora Series, 1995. Jack Ramsdale Photograph

When we think of landscape, we often think of it as an expanse of scenery or as part of the natural world, but we can also think of landscape as a kind of background for our individual lives. We all live and work within our own personal landscapes. We surround ourselves with objects that have meaning to us and help shape our personal identities. The books on our shelves, the plants that we nurture, the special items brought home with us from our travels, our artworks, family pictures and mementos—these contribute to the unique environment from which we move into the larger society. Our personal landscape is formed, in large part, by the ideas we have about the world—its history, its institutions, and the people who inhabit it. Our beliefs and values—what we care about deeply—surround us and inform our day-to-day interactions with others. Our personal landscape also becomes the setting for our work.

Moving out into the world from our personal landscapes, we cannot help but bring the concerns that we have and ideas about how to address issues that are important to us. People care deeply about such matters as the environment, family, and cultural heritage. We care about social justice and spirituality. We have deep concern for others and concerns about the way we work together, educate our children, and govern ourselves. Our personal landscapes infuse the choices we make as we move through our days—what we do and what we say—in our family life, social life and work life. Our personal landscapes become the impetus and the settings for our personal expressions.



Richard Notkin, 1950 in Chicago

Richard Notkin

Born 1948, Chicago, Illinois

Lives and works in Helena, Montana

Received a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute and an MFA from the University of California

Created a series of teapots based on those found in Yixing, China, embedding them with contemporary themes and imagery—called the 20th-Century Solutions Teapot series

Teapots comprise the majority of work between 1983 and 1995

When speaking about the teapot, he calls it “the most complex of vessels, consisting of body, handle, spout, lid and knob. This allows me the widest latitude in juxtaposing the many images I use to set up my narrative pieces.”

Addresses socio-political issues, including war, the Holocaust, and nuclear annihilation

The Gift, a Notkin mural made from 1106 ceramic tiles, depicts the mushroom cloud of the Bikini Atoll nuclear test in 1946, each tile serving as its own bas relief, showing images such as skulls, ears and dice



Richard Notkin, Pyramidal Skull Teapot: Military Intelligence I, 1989

Richard Notkin's artworks are not subtle, nor are they hard to read or interpret. They make direct, powerful, clear statements about the world in which he lives. As a craft artist, Notkin uses traditional materials and techniques to visually express his political concerns. Richard Notkin's personal landscape is highly political. Each handcrafted clay piece tells us what is important to him as well as what he hopes will be important to us. Notkin pushes the boundaries of his art form to express his ideas. In his hands, a teapot transforms into a unique complex vessel. He redefines its purpose without compromising its essential form (body, spout, handle, lid, and knob) or the material (clay).

Notkin's teapots, tiles, and sculpted artworks are visual statements about government, war, and other societal issues. His work is richly detailed and skillfully crafted. At an early age Notkin developed a fascination with the handmade and an interest in detailed and meticulous carving. He also learned how to use his art to express his ideas and tell stories that he feels are important to tell. While his pots are inspired by his interest in traditional Chinese Yixing teapots, they have a separate cultural identity that reflects his world, as do his tiles and other sculptural works. Notkin's personal landscape infuses his work with a deep concern for all of humanity. His personal, private landscape becomes public with his crafted works that speak of his time, his country and his deeply held convictions.



Craft in America Photograph

Denise Wallace

Born 1957, Seattle, Washington

Samuel Wallace

Born 1936, Calvin, Virginia

Denise, a Chugach Aleut (Inuit), and her non-native husband Samuel are partners in both life and work

Denise designing the pieces and handling the metalwork, and Samuel doing the lapidary (setting the stones)

Son David and daughter Dawn also help make the jewelry

Jewelry is made of gold, silver, and semi-precious stones, as well as scrimshawed (etching designs into bone or ivory) fossilized walrus ivory

Crossroads of Continents Belt, considered to be their most important work, took them over 2500 hours to create

Denise grew up in Seattle, but refers to Cordova, Alaska, where many of her Native Alaskan relatives live, as home

In 1977, moved to Sante Fe, New Mexico so Denise could study at the Institute of American Indian Arts

Moved to Hawaii in 1999 after they fell in love with the landscape while visiting the islands



Denise and Samuel Wallace, *Woman in the Moon*, Photography by Kiyoshi Togashi

Jeweler Denise Wallace's summer-time visits to Cordova, Alaska had a profound effect on her as a child. While visiting, her grandmother told stories of their ancestors, stories that had been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years. Wallace also listened to stories about the challenges faced by her parents and grandparents growing up at a time when there was no traditional dancing, when few spoke their ancestral language. It was a time of assimilation—their Native culture was at risk of vanishing. In spite of these struggles, Wallace felt a special connection not only to her family living in Cordova, but also to the natural world of the region.

It was not until later in life that Wallace realized the stories she had heard as a child were important and needed to be told to others to ensure the survival of their culture. The personal landscape that guides her in her craft is predominately social—reflecting her connection to her culture and her determination to keep traditions alive. For Wallace, hand-crafted jewelry she makes with her husband, Sam Wallace, is now a vehicle for telling these stories that are so important to her personal landscape. Each unique piece is based on a traditional story or image that combines the past and the present. These beautiful pieces are rich in history but adapted to modern life—contemporary jewelry inspired by traditional forms. Wallace's personal landscape is deep, stretching far into the past with the stories that inform and guide her in the present. Often those who buy her jewelry want to know the story behind it, which Wallace gladly shares. Thus, the wearers become the storytellers. Through her jewelry and her teaching, Wallace is passing down traditions that are an important part of her identity. She uses her craft to share her deep concerns for her people and their stories.



Richard Notkin, Hexagonal Curbside Teapot: Variation #17, 1987

The Craft Connection

We all live and work within our own personal landscapes—surrounded by objects, ideas, beliefs and values that help shape our personal identities. Both Richard Notkin and Denise Wallace work from within their personal landscapes to share with others what they care about deeply. When craft artists use their art forms to reveal their passions and concerns, their objects are imbued with special meanings. As we view and use the objects they create, we are invited to not only appreciate their beauty and form, but also visit the landscapes from which these objects emerged.



Denise and Samuel Wallace, Crossroads of Continents Belt, 1990, Photography by Kiyoshi Togashi

Craft in Action

View

Have students view the DVD segment on Denise Wallace (jewelry/Community). While viewing, ask students to consider the question: *What people, objects, ideas and beliefs are important parts of the artist's personal landscape?*

Discuss

After viewing the DVD segment on Denise Wallace, engage students in a conversation about the artist and her work. *What does she make? Where does she get her inspiration? What is she trying to convey? What is important to her? What role does her ancestry play in her artwork? What stories is she telling? Why are these stories important to her and important for her to tell? What's her message? What is she trying to say with this artwork? Is there a broader issue she is trying to address?*

View

Have students view the DVD segment on Richard Notkin (clay/Landscape). While viewing, ask students to consider the question: *What people, objects, ideas and beliefs are important parts of the artist's personal landscape?*

Discuss

After viewing the DVD segment on Richard Notkin, engage students in conversation about the artist and his work. *What does he make? Where does he get his inspiration? What is he trying to convey? What is important to him? What roles do history and current events play in his artwork? What issues is he addressing? Why are these issues important to him and important for him to share with others? What's his message? What is he trying to say with this artwork? How is his personal landscape different from that of Denise Wallace? Are there any similarities?*

Craft in the Classroom

Explore

View additional DVD and Web site segments on featured artists Richard Notkin and Denise Wallace.

Explore

Watch DVD or Web site segments for other artists and art forms that explore the theme Landscape: Personal Connections. How do these artists draw upon their own personal landscapes through their artwork? Compare and contrast Hystercine Rankin (quilting/Community), Einar and Jamex de la Torre (glass/Community) and Jan Yager (jewelry/Landscape) with Richard Notkin and Denise Wallace.

Investigate

Making the Personal Public

Divide students into pairs and have them work together to write a radio segment (podcast or blog) about ordinary people who in different ways artists make the personal public. Their segment needs to be about three minutes long, and they will need to discuss two artists who are drawn upon their own personal landscapes—the ideas, beliefs, values, objects, people and traditions that help shape their work—Richard Notkin and Denise Wallace. For each, they should talk about the artist, the artwork, and the landscape (what each artist cares deeply about) Good evening. Tonight we're featuring two artists.... Give each student a copy of the Talk Radio worksheet (Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #1) to work on their radio segments. Have the students work quickly, giving them only 30 minutes to complete the task. When they have all written their segments, have each pair "perform" their radio talk for the class.

Investigate

Working individually or in pairs, have students find three different teapots included in the virtual version of the exhibition CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions, which can be found on the Craft in America Web site: www.craftinamerica.org. Then ask them to complete the Personal Landscapes Revealed worksheet (Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #2). Remind students that craft artists might care about political issues, as with Richard Notkin, or they might care deeply about such things as form, innovation, originality, nature or tradition. When they have completed the worksheets, have students, as a group, describe the teapots they found and the ideas conveyed through each of the vessels. Did all of the teapots convey ideas or concerns? How did you know what ideas or concerns each artist seemed to be trying to communicate?



Einar & Jamex de la Torre, Tijuana on a Silver Platter, 2005

Make Clay Tiles

Begin by having students, as a class, brainstorm issues that are important to them such as world hunger, violence, conflict, poverty, environment, health, human rights, education, cultural identity, multiculturalism, etc. Ask them to think locally, regionally, and globally. When they have generated a list, have them pick one issue that is important or meaningful to the group. They should then spend some time researching that issue. When that research is complete, ask them to boil the issue down its most prominent attributes, and brainstorm images associated with the issue to create a series of simplified images or symbols that convey the issue's essence. While making sketches of their symbols, they should think about how they will communicate their idea to different audiences—children, peers, adults (citizenry), community leaders, and a global audience.

When their designs are complete, have them role out slabs of clay to make a series of tiles. Using Richard Notkin's tiles as models, have them make one tile aimed at each audience. They can use additive and subtractive processes in working with the clay. The tiles can then be glazed and fired, or, alternatively, students can use self-hardening clay, which can then be painted. Mount the tiles as an individual series—glued to board or mounted all together to create a mural-like installation. To conclude the project, ask students to title their artwork, either individually or collectively, and have students "read" and discuss one another's tiles.

Craft in Your World

Tiles are a part of our everyday life. We see them in our bathrooms, on the kitchen floor, as decorative touches throughout our homes. Have students look closely at the various types of tiles they encounter over the course of a day. Ask students: *Are these tiles handcrafted? How can they tell? Why are they not handcrafted? If you were to redesign one of the places where you saw these tiles, how would you incorporate handmade tiles into the new design?*

Make Our Community Part 1

Explain to students that they will begin this art project exploring their community through the stories of others. Like Denise Wallace, have them look to their own communities to inspire their artwork. Have them collect stories from people in their community (family, seniors, public officials, etc.) using the Your Community's Social Landscape worksheet (Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #3) to guide their discussions. The goal of the activity is to use the stories they gather as the basis for their art project, either a handcrafted book or quilt. Each student should interview at least 2-3 people. Questions they can ask to gather the stories include, but are not limited to: What is something special you remember about this community growing up? What is special now? What do you hope future generations will value about this community? What are some of the challenges that the community has faced in the past? Today, who are some people that make this community special? What do you think the community is known for? What is your favorite memory? What is your favorite or special place?

Part 2

When students have gathered the stories, ask them to share some of them with the rest of the class. They should then individually review their findings to identify stories that resonate with them. Have students take those selected stories and turn them into sketches—visual depictions of what they learned from the interviewee. There are two ways students can work with these images:

Create a Story Book

Have students make a handcrafted book using a variety of pre-made papers. The book can take one of many different forms; however, an accordion format would work well for this project. When students have created the book form, they should fill the pages with drawings and collage elements depicting the stories they have chosen to illustrate. They can also draw and write in the book. Complete the project by having students embellish their covers.

Make A Story Quilt

Have students watch the DVD segment on Hystercine Rankin (quilting/Community), focusing on her story quilt. Using the sketches students made earlier, have students choose one that they will turn into a quilt square using basic quilting techniques. When students have completed their quilt squares, sew them together to form a class quilt entitled Our Community's Social Landscape.

Part 3

To bring the project full circle, have students take the books or the quilt they made back to the community. They could be displayed at a local bank, chamber of commerce, city hall, public library, senior center, etc. Students should invite the people they interviewed to view the results of their project, and students could be available on certain days at specific times to talk about the message of book or quilt. This public aspect of the project could constitute part of your school's community service requirement.

Reflect

Have each student write an article for the school paper or local newspaper about the role that art can play in conveying important what people care about. They could write about the artist who inspired them, what the artist's ideas and concerns were, who they interviewed from the community, and how the artists and the people they interviewed became a catalysts for their own work. Their articles should reflect all aspects of what they learned through the various activities and projects they completed.

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Name _____

Date _____

Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #1 – Talk Radio

You and your colleague are the new hosts of a community-based radio/blog/podcast series. For the past several weeks you have been featuring a mix of ordinary people who in different ways are making the personal public. Today, you will be discussing ceramicist Richard Notkin and jeweler Denise Wallace, two craft artists who, in their own ways, draw upon their own personal landscapes—the ideas, beliefs, values, objects, people and traditions—that contribute to their identity and help shape their work.

You and your co-host have 30 minutes to write a basic script for the radio/blog/podcast segment which will air today. Make sure that in preparing your report you talk about the artists, their artwork, and the personal landscapes that inform their work. Use the space below to write your segment.

Name _____

Date _____

Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #2 – Personal Landscapes Revealed

Teapot #1

Teapot #2

Teapot #3

Sketch

Title

Artist

Date

Medium

Unique Characteristics

Concerns and Ideas?

Title

Artist

Date

Medium

Unique Characteristics

Concerns and Ideas?

Title

Artist

Date

Medium

Unique Characteristics

Concerns and Ideas?

Name _____ Date _____

Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #3 –Your Community's Social Landscape

Use this worksheet to help guide your discussions with members of the community. Add additional questions if you like and attach extra sheets of paper if necessary.

Background Information

Name of Interviewee _____

Date of Interview _____ Location _____

Who is this person? _____

Why did you choose him or her? _____

Gathering Stories: The Interview

Describe something special you remember about this community as you grew up.

What is special now?

What do you hope future generations will value about this community?

What are some of the challenges that this community has faced in the past? Today?

Name _____

Date _____

Landscape: Personal Connections Worksheet #3 –Your Community's Social Landscape

Who are some people that make the community special? How do they make it special?

What do you think the community is known for to people from outside the area?

What is your favorite memory?

What is your favorite or special place?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about or add?

additional web resources

American Craft Council
<http://www.craftcouncil.org/>

Smithsonian Archives for American Art
<http://archivesofamericanart.si.edu/exhibits/pastexhibits/craft/craft.htm>

Museum of Arts and Design, NYC (formerly the American Craft Museum)
<http://www.madmuseum.org>

Museum of Craft and Folk Art, San Francisco
<http://www.mocfa.org/>

Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles
<http://www.cafam.org/current.html>

Featured and Related Artists

Kit Carson
<http://www.kitcarsonjewelry.com/>
http://freehand.com/artists/story_117.php

David Gurney
<http://handsgallery.com/artists/show/20>
<http://www.ceramicmonthly.org/expandedcontent/2007-03/upfront/default.asp>

George Nakashima
<http://www.nakashimawoodworker.com/>
<http://www.nakashimafoundation.org/>

Richard Notkin
<http://www.ceramicstoday.com/potw/notkin.htm>
<http://www.plasm.com/cana/CBCeramics/Ceramics/Friends/Notkin/Notkin.html>
<http://www.archiebray.org/residents/notkin/index.html>

Denise Wallace and Samuel Wallace
<http://www.denisewallace.com/>
http://www.iaiancad.org/apressrelease_121.php

Jan Yager
http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/fashion/object_stories/tiara/index.html
<http://www.pewarts.org/2003/yager/main.html>
<http://art.wmich.edu/alumni/academy/yager/>

additional web resources

Art Forms

Book Arts

Book Arts Web
The Center for Book Arts
Book Arts Guild
Projet Mobilivre/Bookmobile Project

<http://www.philobiblon.com/>
<http://www.centerforbookarts.org/>
<http://bookartsguild.org/>
<http://www.mobilivre.org/>

Ceramics

American Ceramic Society
Ceramics Today

<http://www.ceramics.org/>
<http://www.ceramicstoday.com/>

Fibers

All Fiber Arts
Handweavers Guild of America
National Basketry Organization
PBS's The Art of Quilting Series

<http://www.allfiberarts.com/>
<http://www.weavespindye.org/>
<http://www.nationalbasketry.org/>
<http://www.pbs.org/americaquilts/>

Glass

Glass Art Society
Contemporary Glass Society (UK)
Stained Glass Association of America

<http://www.glassart.org/>
<http://www.cgs.org.uk>
<http://www.stainedglass.org/>

Metals

Anvil Fire
Lapidary Journal
Art Metal
Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco
Society of American Silversmiths

<http://www.anvilfire.com/>
<http://www.lapidaryjournal.com/>
<http://www.artmetal.com/>
<http://www.metalartsguildsf.org/>
<http://www.silversmithing.com/>

Paper

Hand Papermaking
International Association of
Hand Papermakers and Paper Artists

<http://www.handpapermaking.org/>
<http://www.iapma.info/>

Wood

Woodworkers Website Association
Fine Woodworking
Wood Magazine

<http://www.woodworking.org/>
<http://www.taunton.com/finewoodworking/>
<http://www.woodmagazine.com/>

National Visual Art Standards

ArtsEdge, Kennedy Center

<http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm>

Credits & Copyright

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