

CRAFT IN AMERICA

COLLECTING AND CURATING MEANING-FILLED OBJECTS EDUCATION GUIDE

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students watch the segment from Craft in America's VISIONARIES episode featuring long-time collector Forrest L. Merrill. Mr. Merrill collects vessels made of wood, metal, glass, fiber and clay. Merrill states, "I'm not particularly interested in just showing pretty things. I want the work to have a story. I want the artist, through the work, to tell a story. I would like there to be some message or some goal to share with people this totally different way of life, of living with art."

The lesson focuses on collectors and why it is important to them to collect and display their objects. Students learn how collectors tend to organize and display their collections and what they look for when adding to their collections. While viewing VISIONARIES, students also meet Michele Ellis Pracy, Fresno Art Museum curator, and fiber artist Kay Sekimachi. Through investigation of Sekimachi's *Leaf Bowls*, students consider the message or story they convey and also learn about the role of a curator. In studio work, students will work individually or in small groups to curate a small exhibition of a collection of their choosing. They must provide a rationale about their collection and create an exhibition plan as well as a "vision statement" about their exhibition.

Key Concepts:

- Human beings often collect things, and when we do, we tend to store, care for, produce an inventory, and display the collection for others to see and appreciate.
- Collectors and curators consider various techniques, methods, venues, and criteria when interpreting, selecting, and curating artworks and objects for a viewing audience.
- Artworks and objects collected, preserved, or presented by collectors and curators communicate meaning and often tell a story of personal, social, or cultural significance.
- People gain insights into meanings of artworks and objects by engaging in careful description and interpretation.

Critical Questions:

- Why do people collect?
- How do collectors organize and display their collections?
- What is involved in curating an exhibition?

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Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that people often collect artworks and objects that alone and collectively have meaning and tell a story.
- Speculate about why people collect artworks and other objects.
- Curate an exhibition of artworks or other objects by choosing artworks/objects that are to be displayed, deciding where and how they will be displayed, and providing a vision statement to explain the curatorial choices made.
- Create a two-dimensional exhibition plan indicating the placement of objects and viewers' pathway through the exhibition.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Anchor Standard #4. Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation. VA:Pr4.1.8a, VA:Pr4.1.1a, VA:Pr4.1.11a
- Anchor Standard #6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. VA:Pr6.1.8a, VA:Pr6.1.11a
- Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. VA:Re8.1.8a, VA:Re8.1.1a,
- Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. VA:Cn11.1.8a

Materials

- Drawing paper 11 x 17 or 17 x 22
- Pencils, Markers
- Foam board or cardboard for use in creating (optional) three-dimensional exhibition models

About the Collector

Collector Forrest L. Merrill has a deep appreciation for all manner of hand-wrought vessels of wood, metal, glass, fiber, and clay, as well as for the exceptional artists who create them. But even



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more important are the personal relationships he forges with these artists and his desire to share his unique collection with a public for whom art education and exposure to art is disappearing. Inspired in 1950 by a high school art teacher, his first purchase was a glass bowl by Glen Lukens, a pioneer in studio crafts. Right then, a collector was born. Merrill's collection, based in Berkeley, CA, is one of the largest and most important of its kind in the world, containing pieces that span the arcs of entire careers of major artists of the 20th and 21st centuries.