



# CRAFT IN AMERICA

## *JULIE CHEN: THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOOK* EDUCATION GUIDE

### Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students watch Julie Chen's segment from the PROCESS episode, which explores the sculptural books of artist Julie Chen. Students will explore how a book can be considered a three-dimensional artwork, the conceptual boundaries to bookmaking, and the use of text, images and ideas/meaning related to books.

Students will create an art book that has personal meaning and goes beyond the traditional idea of a book. Students will select materials, images, and text for their book, create a prototype, and write an artist's statement which describes their work. Books and the artists' statements can be displayed for viewing in class and/or school.

### Key Concepts:

- Artists sometimes explore conceptual boundaries of art forms.
- During the process of making art, artists often consider how the viewer will experience the artwork.
- A book can be considered a three-dimensional artwork - a sculpture - that has both content and form.
- Some artists allow for new ideas and directions to gradually enter into the art-making process.

### Critical Questions:

- What is a book?
- When is a book a work of visual art?
- Why might it be important for the artist to consider the viewer when planning and creating an art book?

### Objectives

#### Students will:

- Explore the parts and defining characteristics of a book.
- Compare and contrast traditional books with the books of Julie Chen.
- Investigate nontraditional structures for books.
- Create a book with personal meaning that goes beyond the confines of a traditional book.

### 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.



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### Content Standard:

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
2. Using knowledge of structures and functions
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

### Student Worksheets

- Worksheet 1: Julie Chen: Amazing Books!
- Worksheet 2: Finding and Making Connections

### Interdisciplinary Connection

- Language Arts
- History/Social Studies

### Materials

- Various packaging materials for students to consider as book structures
- Old hardbound books to be "gutted" and used for structure
- A variety of colors, textures, and weights of paper
- Pencils, rulers, compasses
- A variety of color writing implements
- Paints, brushes
- Newspapers, cardboard
- Collage materials
- Glue, rubber cement, double sided tape
- Exacto knives and scissors

### About the Artist

Contemporary book artist Julie Chen uses non-traditional approaches to bookmaking and artistic processes to push the boundaries of bookmaking and explore books as unconventional structures.

Chen pushes the conceptual limits of books through her use of materials, text and images. She creates forms that function as "vessels" for ideas and meaning. She believes the element of surprise is integral to her books as well as exquisite craftsmanship and the use of letterpress text.

Chen states that her work is rooted in the physical object and has to have meaning. She believes a book is a work of art.

"In my mind, I'm trying to give the viewer/reader an experience that has to do with reading, that has to do with a one-on-one physical experience with the object." - Julie Chen