



*Etsuko Ichikawa: NACHI*  
*– between the eternal and the ephemeral –*

February 26 – August 13, 2011

University of Wyoming Art Museum 2011  
Educational Packet for K-12 Teachers

**Purpose of this Packet:** To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibition and age appropriate suggestions for exploring the concepts, meanings, and artistic intent of artwork before, during, and after the museum visit.

**Curricular Unit Topic:** Developing a personal artistic voice that reflects cultural upbringing, sense of place and direction.

The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to **observe, question, explore, create and reflect.**

**Observe:** Students will observe the large-scale installation of artist Etsuko Ichikawa. They will look closely at the materials the artist uses and how she joins materials and media together to form one large sculpture that explores the quality and characteristics of a specific moment in time and place: Nachi, a waterfall and shrine in Kumano, Japan.

**Question:** Students will read, write, sketch, and listen to teachers and museum educators in order to come up with questions about the artists' background, the materials used, construction methods and the concepts behind the artwork. Students will question and discuss their own responses to the artwork in the exhibition.

**Explore:** Students will explore the cultural and artistic background of the artist. They will consider how these contribute to her artwork. They will investigate how art helps us understand the essence of a place or moment in time, using materials and media. They will be encouraged to define vocabulary words and related aspects of the exhibit.

**Create:** Students will be given time to sketch and draw in the galleries. In the studio they may create their own sculptural works, line drawings, choreographed prints, or mixed media pieces.

**Reflect:** Students will evaluate their final artwork with other students, teachers, and museum educators. Upon returning home or to the classroom, students may write an essay about their process of making art and the concepts behind the work.



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**Introduction:** Artist Etsuko Ichikawa has created a place for museum visitors to quietly reflect on those moments in our lives that are fleeting, and yet lasting in our memory; personal, yet global. Inspired by a visit to her home country of Japan and the waterfall shrine known as Nachi, her large-scale installation is comprised of pyrographs (drawings created with molten glass on thick paper), thousands of suspended cotton threads, video projections of movements by dancers Mizue Trinidad, Trinidad Martínez, and Etienne Cakpo, and water sounds created with the assistance of sound artist Damon Mori.

Visitors follow a spiral that is approximately 123 linear feet and comprised of over 11 miles of cotton twine cut into 8,200 pieces that diminish in length, culminating in a 16-foot long central flowing drop of cotton. The center “fall” is surrounded by 6 pyrograph drawings that measure 14 x 4-1/2 feet. The sound of water droplets emanates from a wooden platform in the center of this enclosed space. The spiral form serves as the backdrop for the video projections of the dancers’ movements, allowing the projections to shine through onto the wall behind.

**Artist’s Background:** Etsuko Ichikawa received a BFA in painting from the Tokyo Zokei University and has been working with glass since 1991. She has exhibited at Aqua in Miami Beach and has had numerous solo, site-specific, and collaborative exhibitions nationally and internationally. Ichikawa is the recipient of numerous prestigious grants, fellowships, and residencies, including an artist residency at Jentel in Banner, WY. She was born in Japan and lives and works in Seattle.



**Artist’s Statement:** Where do our ancestors come from and where we are going? What remains and what is forgotten? Making art is an act of marking our present time that connects both to the past and the future. At the same time, it is a way of understanding who I am on a very personal level. Through my recent journey through Kumano, a sacred region in Japan, I realized that places and beliefs that have been maintained in our society for hundreds if not thousands of years could bring a fresh perspective and timeless understanding to our own beings. It was an eye-opening moment of inspiration that immediately seeded the idea I want to be developed for this exhibition.

The exhibit title “Nachi” is the name of the waterfall in Kumano that is considered to be a shrine itself. For over 1,200 years, people from all levels of society have made the arduous pilgrimage to this site for worship and purification. Kojiki, the oldest extant chronicle in Japan from the early 8th century, tells that the first emperor Jinmu, the mythical founder of Japan, saw something shining in the mountain, found that it was the waterfall, and then enshrined it as a god.

When I stood in front of this magnificent waterfall, looking up over 400 feet, I imagined that continuous stream of rushing water clearing the minds of the countless people who’ve stood before it to offer their thoughts and prayers. I was overwhelmed by the power of time that this waterfall has witnessed. Then, I realized that this very moment is the ephemeral, and at the same time, the eternal.

- Etsuko Ichikawa, 2011

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**Lesson Overview:** Students will investigate the work of artist Etsuko Ichikawa. They will learn about her artistic techniques, skills and style. They will explore the artwork: the materials and media selected by the artist to create this installation and the intention of the artist. They will consider ideas generated as the result of viewing *NACHI*. They will discuss how artists convey information about “place” through the use of materials, techniques, style. They will sketch and draw, and develop word lists that describe what they see and how they feel about this work. They may write short paragraphs in response to worksheet questions about the exhibit.

In the Shelton Studio, students may create their own sculptural works, line drawings, choreographed prints, or mixed media pieces considering materials, form, texture, and color.

Students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about the work of Etsuko Ichikawa before arriving at the art museum, using the vocabulary word list attached to this lesson as the beginning of their investigative process. Additional information and research materials may be found as the result of web-searching the artist. They may begin conversations about how our history, culture and where we live influence the work of artists and viewers alike. They may consider what role our memories play in helping define who we are, and how artists can influence how we think and feel about a place. Students might write about a memory of a place that has special meaning for them.



**Essential Questions:** The following questions will help students better understand Etsuko Ichikawa’s work and make connections between the studies of art and other disciplines, including dance, science, cultural studies, geography and more.

### **Grades K-6**

- What materials are used to make this art?
- What words would you use to describe this artwork to a friend?
- What shapes can you find in the work?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What movement is there?
- Why did the artist include all of these in one artwork?
- How does this work make you feel?

### **Grades 7-12**

- What does this art make you think about?
- How important are Ichikawa’s personal experiences and memories to the creation of this work?
- Is it possible to capture a moment in time (what we see, how we feel, how we respond) through artwork? Explain.
- Can artwork help us remember a specific place, without recreating the exact details of that place?
- What are the ephemeral components of the work that the artist might be referring to?

### **Art questions to consider**

- How important are the materials Ichikawa uses to the meaning of her work?
- How do you think she creates the darker color on the ends of the rope?
- Why do you think she darkens the rope?
- What other artistic devices does the artist use (repetition, texture, spiral, etc.)? Why?
- What artistic skills does the artist need in order to create this work?
- What other skills or knowledge does the artist need?

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**Pre-visit activities:** In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest teachers and students consider the following activities:

- Students read about and research Japan and the culture of the Japanese people, including the role of nature in their daily lives.
- Students identify places that have meaning for them, individually and collectively, and write about what makes those places special and how they feel when they think about the place.
- Students and teachers explore making art with different and unusual materials available in their classroom and at home.

**Prerequisite knowledge:** Museum educators work with teachers to ensure all projects are age and skills appropriate. Teachers may select words from this vocabulary list for students to look up and understand:

Sculpture  
2-dimensional  
3-dimensional  
Texture  
Installation art  
Spiral  
Line  
Pyrograph  
Ephemeral  
Eternal

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## Museum activities

These activities are suggestions. Museum educators will work with teachers to carefully tailor all classes to their students' needs, in support of classroom goals and district and state education standards.

### Part 1 – Time frame: 30 - 45 minutes (in the galleries)

- Students will closely observe the artwork of Etsuko Ichikawa.
- Students may be given a worksheet so they can respond in writing or drawing to the work they see by recording their observations and their own thoughts about the work.
- Students will create word lists that help them remember the way the art looks or describes the way they feel about the work.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- They learn more about the artist and why she creates this artwork.
- Students will think about the connections between art and the natural world exhibited here. They may discuss places in nature that have important meaning for them personally, and for the state and nation. They will define vocabulary words and provide examples in the natural world that fit the definitions.

### Part 2 – Time frame: 45 - 60 minutes (in the Shelton Studio)

The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum educators will work with teachers to develop specific projects which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students may explore ways to create their own hanging sculptures, creating a “place” that has meaning for them, using a variety of materials.
- Students will create art that responds to and/or captures movement, sound, feeling.
- Students may create shadow drawings, line reliefs, etc.
- Students may explore ways to respond to *NACHI*, through haiku, cinquain, narrative writing and more.
- Students may identify “ephemeral” moments, materials, actions (smoke, fire, raindrops, sunsets, dance, etc.) and create artwork that reflects, is inspired by or responds to that instant.

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**Post visit activities:** We have found that students achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit when time is scheduled for post-visit activities. Here are some suggestions:

- Students might research a natural site that has meaning for them, creating artwork in response.
- Students may research Japan and the culture of the people of Japan.
- Students can investigate the process of glassblowing, and the use of molten glass in art. They may want to explore the work of Dale Chihuly, one of Etsuko Ichikawa’s mentors.
- Students may research the work of other installation artists, comparing and contrasting their work to Ichikawa’s.
- Students may explore the science of glass blowing and how the artist uses components of this process to create her drawings.
- Students might write about the idea “ephemeral” and compare and contrast it with the idea “eternal,” relating to and drawing from their own personal experiences.

**Suggested uses in the curriculum:** The study of *NACHI – between the eternal and the ephemeral –* and its cultural, artistic, historic, scientific, and environmental aspects will tie to multiple curricular areas including: the arts, math, sciences, history, English, reading and writing, agricultural studies, debate and philosophy. Museum staff will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Teaching Standards and to align museum projects and studies with ongoing classroom curricular units and lessons.

**Recommended resources:**

- [www.etsukoichikawa.com/](http://www.etsukoichikawa.com/)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbQucVqJ3Rk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbQucVqJ3Rk)
- [www.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/thearts/2008223150\\_ichikawa03.html](http://www.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/thearts/2008223150_ichikawa03.html) and other internet sites
- *The Lure of the Local*, Lucy R. Lippard, New Press, 1998.
- *Installation Art*, Claire Bishop, Routledge, 2005.
- *Fire, Dale Chihuly*, Portland Press, 2006.
- *The Way We Do It in Japan*, Geneva Cobb Iijima, Albert Whitman & Company, 2002.

**Materials for selected Shelton Studio projects are provided by the art museum.**

**Assessment and documentation of museum tour and studio experiences:** In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we may ask that participants help us assess the activities and learning that take place. Examples of evaluation tools include:

1. Students may self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and explorations, and their studio experience,
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick-survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students’ experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum educators will record their observations and assessments.
4. When time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art completed in the Shelton Studio.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available to teachers upon written request for use in teaching and student portfolios.