

# EDUCATIONAL PACKET

## DEVELOPED FOR K-12 TEACHERS



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING ART MUSEUM 2009



## Ichiro: A Life's Work of Netsuke

### The Huey Shelton Collection

#### PURPOSE OF THIS PACKET:

To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibitions and suggest age appropriate applications for exploring concepts, meaning, and artistic intent of work exhibited, before, during, and after the museum visit.

#### CURRICULAR UNIT TOPIC:

To examine netsuke sculptures as a means of artistic and cultural expression. The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to observe, question, explore, create, and reflect.

#### OBSERVE:

Students and teachers will observe the examples of netsuke carvings from master Netsuke carver Ichiro. Students will make comparisons between the different styles and subject matter of netsuke.

#### QUESTION:

Students will have the opportunity to discuss the Japanese art form of netsuke. What are netsuke? What is the purpose? What materials are used? How do the netsuke carvings depict Japanese life?

#### EXPLORE:

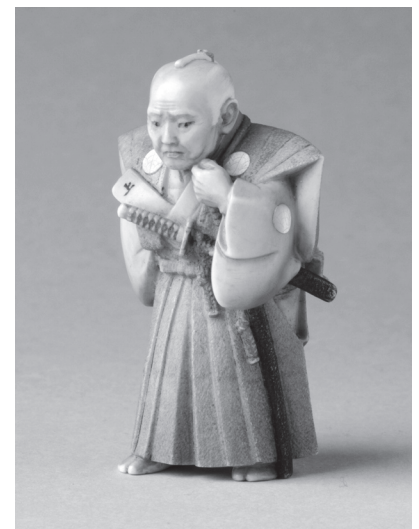
Students are encouraged to examine the various professions, animals, and activities depicted in the netsuke carvings. What does the choice of subject say about what is valued in the Japanese culture?

#### CREATE:

Students will be given time to create. They will sketch, draw, or sculpt a design for a netsuke that reflects the student's individual culture.

#### REFLECT:

Students will discuss their finished artwork with the other students and teachers and write a reflective paper about the process they used to complete their work.



Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1891-1977), Elderly Samurai Standing Pensively, Not dated, Ivory, 1-1/4 x 7/8 x 1 inches, *The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke*, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.135



Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1897-1977), Seated Woman with a Child and Cat, not dated, ivory, paint, 1-3/8 x 2 x 1-1/4 inches, The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.98

## INTRODUCTION:

Inada Ichiro (Japanese, 1891-1979) was an important 20th century netsuke artist. For centuries, the Japanese have used miniature sculptures hung by cords from the sash of their traditional garments such as the *kimono* to secure personal belongings in small pouches. Intricate and figurative, the netsuke reflects aspects of Japanese life.

## HISTORY AND BACKGROUND:

In the genre of twentieth-century netsuke carving, Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1891-1977) is regarded for his enchanting designs drawn from genre and Kabuki theater subjects, and as the artist who first used paint extensively on ivory.

Threaded through his long career as a netsuke carver has always been his love of painting. At the age of twenty-five, after studying ivory carving for twelve years with the master Sano Koichi, he was expelled for expressing the desire to study Western painting. Ichiro went on to study painting, financing his education at the Nippon Bijutsuin by carving netsuke.

At the age of thirty, he finished his schooling

and set himself up as an ivory artist, focusing on netsuke, okimono (cabinet size pieces), and Buddhist statues. During World War II, when ivory was virtually unobtainable, Ichiro carved netsuke from wood. Some netsuke collectors consider his wood netsuke of this period his finest works.

After the war, when he resumed ivory carving, he concentrated mostly on figures from Kabuki plays, Japanese history, and everyday life. It was then that he felt his “little people” would be more real if he could improve methods of coloring ivory. He used pure pigments, and his blues have become an Ichiro hallmark.

He used only hand tools, saws, and drills. Ichiro preferred a dull finish, but what little polishing was necessary he did himself with the leaf of the muku tree or very fine sandpaper. His netsuke are original and skillful, but not pretentiously intricate in technique. They are carved from a rough pencil sketch, true to tradition in subject matter, strong, and somewhat stylized in design.

The mode of dress in feudal Japan for both men

and women was a long robe-like garment of wrap-around style called a kimono.

It was kept closed in front by means of an obi (waist sash). There were no pockets in the kimono. The men wore tobacco pouches, moneybags, writing implements, and inro (compartmented cases for medicines or seals) suspended by cords from the obi. To prevent the sagemono (suspended object) from slipping, a small toggle was attached to the other end of the cord. This toggle was a netsuke (meaning “root attachment”). Toggles have been used by other cultures throughout the world, but only the netsuke evolved into an art form.

The majority of netsuke were carved of wood or ivory. Other materials included lacquer, stag antler, horn, boar’s tusk, coral, amber, and pottery. Some artists combined materials and used inlays effectively. To fulfill their function as toggles, netsuke had to be reasonably lightweight. They had to be small enough to rest or dangle at the top of the obi and not interfere with freedom of movement.

They had to be rounded and free from sharp projections that could tear the fabric of a kimono or jab the wearer.

The most common form in netsuke is katabori, three-dimensional carvings. The second most common form is manju, named after the round rice-cake it resembles. Its button-like shape is usually decorated with a carving in high or low relief.

Netsuke had to have himotoshi (holes) for the cords which pass through the inro, through the ojime (a bead which slides down the cords to keep the inro cases together), into the netsuke and then knotted so the entire ensemble could hang from the obi.

Some artists incorporated openings in the design of a piece, such as the space between the body and the folded legs of a reclining animal, rather than drilling holes in the side worn against the body.

The subjects depicted in netsuke (as well as inro and ojime) are endless and record every phase of Japanese life during the Tokugawa (Edo) Period. Love of nature, especially the lower forms, is evident in netsuke art.

Animals, birds, humans engaged in occupations or frivolity, heroes, deities, mythical creatures, legends, toys, and everyday objects are all treated, sometimes seriously, sometimes humorously. Among the most popular subjects are the animals of the zodiac.

*University of Wyoming Ichiro: A Life's Work of Netsuke, The Huey Shelton Collection text label adapted from Contemporary Netsuke by Miriam Kinsey*

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will place netsuke in the cultural and geographic context of Japan. They will learn about traditional Japanese dress and the functional use of netsuke within that framework.



Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1897-1977), Shichifukujin, Seven Gods of Luck, and Netsuke Storage Box, not dated, wood, ivory, paint, dimensions variable, The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.143-150

Students will also learn about materials. They will look at the materials used in *Ichiro: A Life's Work of Netsuke, The Huey Shelton Collection*, where those materials come from, tools used to carve these materials, and how materials and tools have changed over time.

Subject matter of netsuke carving will also be discussed. What types of subjects are used in netsuke? What do these subjects tell about the culture they represent?

During their time in the gallery, students will be asked to use a sketchbook or journal. For classes/students without journals, sketch paper will be provided. Students will be asked to respond to the exhibit by building word lists, writing down thoughts or questions, and by sketching objects on display. These

journals will be used as reference to create art in the Shelton Studio.

In the Shelton Studio, students will extend their knowledge of Japanese netsuke by thinking about their own culture and how individuals within it adorn themselves. What do their choices say about them?

Art projects in the Studio will reflect this discussion. Student will be asked to design their own netsuke. This can take many forms and will be determined through discussions between the museum educator and the classroom teacher.

Three-dimensional designs will be created and students will be asked to reflect, in writing, about their netsuke.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

### GRADES K-6

- What is culture?
- Where is Japan? What is its geography? Climate? Plants? Animals?
- What is a netsuke? Its function?
- What kinds of subjects are carved as netsuke?
- What can we learn about the Japanese culture by looking at netsuke?
- What materials are used to create netsuke?
- How do the artists obtain these materials?
- How has trade influenced the art of netsuke?

### GRADES 7-12

- How does the Japanese culture influence the netsuke form?
- Why has netsuke remained a cultural art form even though its functionality has waned?
- Has this art form changed over the centuries? Explain.
- How did Ichiro adapt his carving technique to changing materials?
- How does clothing inform artistic expression and vice versa?
- What netsuke would you carve? Why would



Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1897-1977), Yuki-Daruma, Snowman, not dated, ivory, mother of pearl, 1-3/16 x 1 x 1 inches, The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.139



Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1897-1977), Come to Play with Me, if You Have No Parents, not dated, ivory, paint, dimensions variable, The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection

you choose that form?

### ART QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What materials are used to create the works in this exhibit? What are the challenges of using these materials?
- What carving techniques are used?
- How is the use of balance and composition expressed in netsuke?
- If you were to make your own netsuke, what materials would you choose to use?

### 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:

- Read about Japan, its history, culture, climate, geography, and natural resources.
- Learn about the plants and animals that inhabit Japan.
- Read stories, fiction and non-fiction, about

life in Feudal Japan.

- Research traditional Japanese garb.
- Research the evolution and function of netsuke.
- Examine examples of utilitarian art across cultures.

### PREREQUISITE SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

---

Museum educators will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate.

Teachers may select words from the following vocabulary word list for students to look up and understand:

- Netsuke
- Kimono
- Obi
- Balance
- Utilitarian
- Okimono
- 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 objects in *Ichiro*.
- Students may be given worksheets or journals so that they may respond to the exhibit by recording their observations and impressions through sketching and writing.
- Students will create word lists about the exhibit that help them describe the art work or explain how they feel about it.
- Students will identify the materials used to create each work in the exhibit.
- Students will examine the purpose and subject of netsuke in this exhibit.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.

- Students will engage in discussions about their observations, sketches, and reflections with one another, teachers, and museum educators.

### 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 will explore artistic devices used to create netsuke, such as shape, balance, and composition.
- They will create their own netsuke using these artistic devices. The netsuke should take into account their individual expressions and students should be able to reflect on how their designs are similar to or different than their peers and community.
- Students will examine the artistic concepts of shape, balance, and composition to create



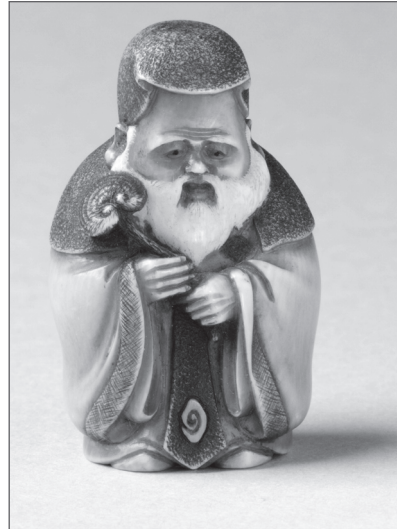
Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1891-1977), Seated Bente, Not dated, Ivory, 1-1/4 x 1 x 1-1/4 inches, *The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke*, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.64

the three-dimensional netsuke form that best describes them. They should be prepared to discuss their art work with their peers, teachers, and museum educators.

- Students may write a reflective paper that describes their favorite piece on exhibit in *Ichiro*.

## POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

To achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit it is important to schedule time to complete post-visit activities. These allow for deeper understanding as well as provide opportunities for assessment of standards.



TOP: Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1891-1977), Jurogin Holding a Scepter, Not dated, Ivory, 1-1/4 x 3/4 x 7/8 inches, *The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke*, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.129

BOTTOM RIGHT: Ichiro Inada (Japanese, 1897-1977), *The Visit*, not dated, ivory, paint, dimensions variable, *The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke*, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection

BOTTOM LEFT: Inada Ichiro (Japanese, 1891-1977), *Standing Farmer Sowing Seed*, not dated, Ivory, 1-1/4 x 3/4 x 7/8 inches, *The Huey G. and Phyllis T. Shelton Collection of Ichiro Inada Netsuke*, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, 2009.5.108



**Here are some suggested activities:**

- Use individual netsuke sketches to produce a three-dimensional object.
- Use writing to reflect on the museum visit. What process was used to create a netsuke? What was your intent as the artist? What does your design say about you?
- Research traditional netsuke forms.
- Pick a favorite object in the exhibit and write a creative story about the piece. When was it used? Who wore it? What experiences did they have?
- Research historical and contemporary Japanese culture and create a presentation that compares and contrasts time periods, utilizing appropriate technology (web search, Power Point presentation, etc.).

## SUGGESTED CURRICULUM USE

*Ichiro: A Life's Work of Netsuke, The Huey Shelton Collection* will tie into a variety of curricular areas including, but not limited to the following:

- Multiculturalism
- History
- Art
- Language Arts

Museum educators will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Standards and align museum projects and activities with classroom lessons and assessments.

## SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- University of Wyoming Art Museum website, <http://www.uwyo.edu/artmuseum>
- Exhibition materials such as the Cell Phone tour
- Research online about Japan, netsuke, etc.
- Sandfield, Norman and Huey G. Shelton. Ichiro Master Netsuke Carver. Shelton Family Press. Chicago, 2009.
- Symmes, Edwin C. Jr. Netsuke Japanese Life and

Legend in Miniature. Charles e. Tuttle Company. Vermont and Japan, 1990.

- Kinsey, Miriam. Contemporary Netsuke. Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1977.
- Earle, Joe. Netsuke Fantasy and Reality in Japanese Miniature Sculpture. MFA Publications. Boston, 2001.

## MATERIALS TO BE SUPPLIED TO EACH STUDENT

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

## ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION

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:

- Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and explorations, and their studio experience,
- 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.
- Museum educators will record their observations and assessments.
- When studio time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art completed in the Shelton Studio.
- 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.