

EDUCATIONAL PACKET

DEVELOPED FOR K-12 TEACHERS

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING ART MUSEUM 2009



Aggregations, New Work

by Kwang Young Chun

PURPOSE OF THIS PACKET:

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

CURRICULAR UNIT TOPIC:

Developing a personal artistic voice that reflects cultural upbringing and individual characteristics 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 aggregate art work of Korean artist Kwang Young Chun. They will look closely at the materials the artist uses, and how he joins many pieces together — much like a puzzle — to form one large sculpture or wall piece.

QUESTION:

Students will have an opportunity to read, write, sketch, listen to teachers and museum educators, and, then, to come up with questions about the artist's background, the materials he uses, construction methods and the concepts behind the art work. Students will be able to question and discuss their own responses to the art work in the exhibition.

EXPLORE:

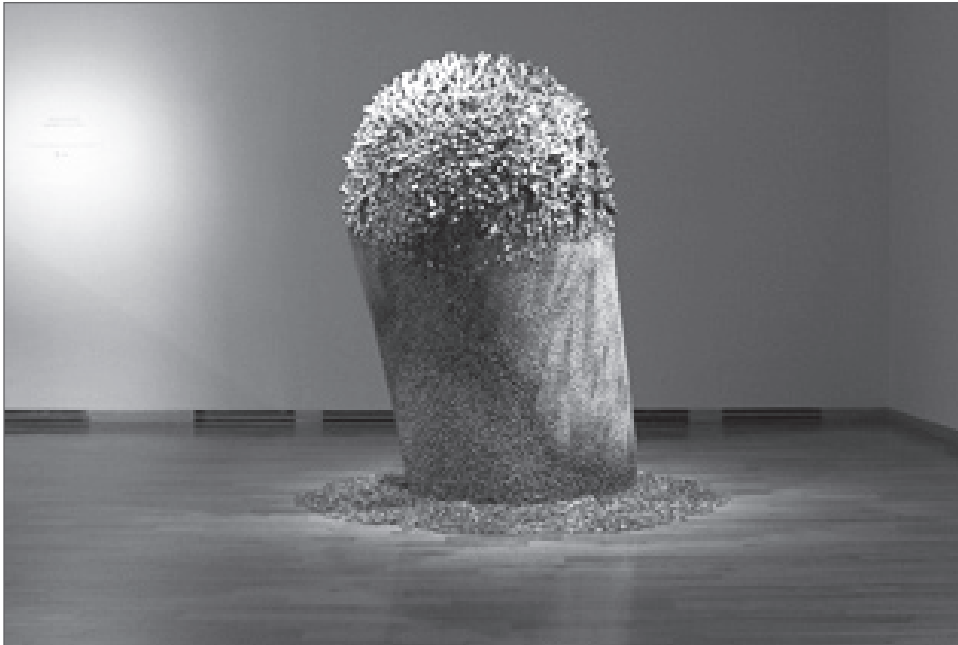
Students will explore the cultural and artistic background of the artist. They will consider how these contribute to his art work. They will explore how mulberry paper is made and used. They will consider how the past can contribute to the present through art work. They will be encouraged to define the 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 will create their own aggregations. Museum educators will work with teachers to determine the materials to be used for these constructions.

REFLECT:

Students will evaluate their final art products with other students from their classes and with teachers and museum educators. They will be given feedback on the art work and the concepts behind the making of the art work. After this process, each person will then write an essay about their process of making art and the concepts behind the work. This portion of the museum experience can be carried out in the student's home school and classroom.



Kwang-Young Chun, *Aggregation 08-AU022*, 2008, mixed media, 14 ft x 8 ft diameter, photo courtesy of Aldrich Museum of Art

INTRODUCTION

Korean artist Kwang Young Chun (b. 1944) began work on his series of *Aggregations* in the 1990s. Today, he is recognized internationally for these sculptural forms. The basis of his work is individual, triangular, Styrofoam shapes. Individually, these shapes are minuscule. Taken together, however, their visual impact is immense. This concept of the aggregate is what informs Chun's work.

The Styrofoam shapes are covered in Korean mulberry paper. In Korea, the paper is a mainstay and has many utilitarian uses from floor and window coverings to candy and medicinal wrappers. It also resonates with personal meaning for the artist, who recalls trips to an herbalist as a small child. Medicines wrapped in mulberry paper hung from the ceiling of the shop, the paper protecting the contents from dampness and insects.

Chun uses pages recycled from old books to cover the geometric forms. These pages are covered in Korean and Chinese characters, adding another layer of cultural and personal meaning. He hand ties the paper over each shape, twisting pages into string to complete the wrapping. In this way Chun

is able to integrate traditional materials into a contemporary context.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

After starting his artistic career studying western painting, in particular Abstract Expressionism, Chun turned to the mulberry paper as a way to express his unique, Korean artistic voice. The papers, taken from books that are often as old as one hundred years, have been touched by people from all walks of life. Over the years, these people — men and women, young and old — have left indelible fingerprints. Chun captures the spirit of these people and their varied voices in his series of *Aggregations*.

Aggregation 08-AU022 is Chun's largest sculptural work to date and measures almost fourteen feet high. The sculpture gives the overall appearance of being monolithic, yet upon closer inspection the intricacies of material, shape, shade, and hue become apparent. Similarly, the wall reliefs included in this exhibition are an examination of texture and shape. The individual pieces come together to create surfaces that resemble

topographies and landscapes. Separately, they appear organic in shape, resembling crystals or rocks. The surfaces of the sculpture and the wall reliefs are irregular and highly textured, layered with meaning. Chun brings both the positive and the negative to his works. Dark, shadowed shapes give the appearance of a scar or wound, while lighter surfaces counterbalance these elements. His work is often influenced by historical or political events that have shaped people's lives and experiences.

Subtle color is integrated into some of the wall pieces from natural dyes, which are often plant based. Chun dips the individual triangle shapes into the dye and the mulberry paper absorbs the color. The wall reliefs included in this exhibition have not previously been seen in the United States.

Kwang-Young Chun received his BFA from Hong-Ik University, Seoul, and his MFA from the Philadelphia College of Art. His work has been exhibited extensively on an international level, including in Moscow, Singapore and Paris. The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Korea named him Artist of the Year in 2001 and he is represented by Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

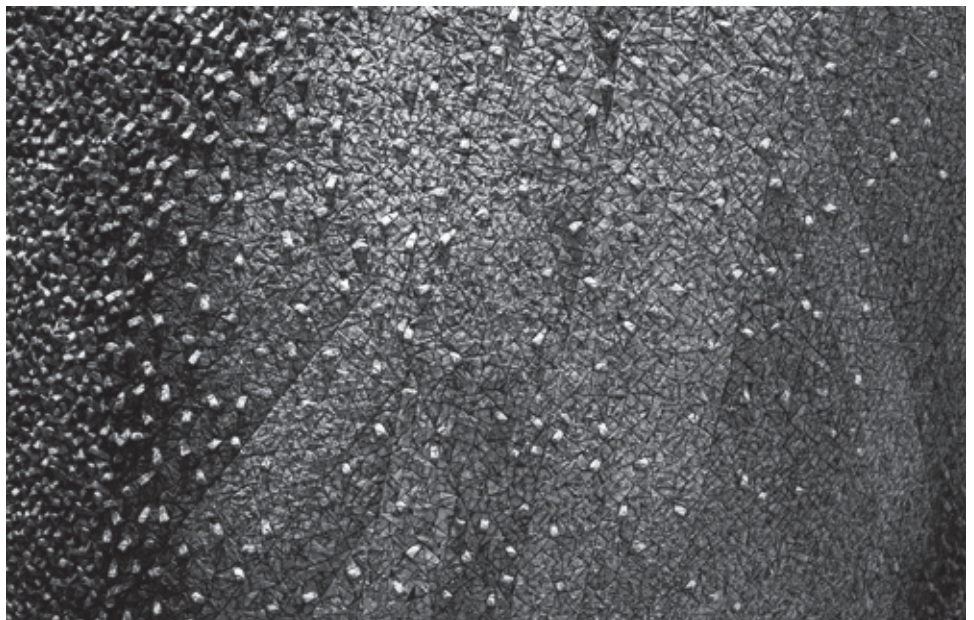
ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My twenties were all about America. The thin young man from a distant country suddenly found himself a 'social, ideological' alien in this new world.

The American dream promised success and wealth, but the reality was that some innocent youth in every other house was dying on the battlefield. This was a country where democracy had begun, but the young ones seemed to be doomed to an unfair death. Some were dragged into a meaningless war ending their lives in a far away jungle, while others absorbed themselves in antiwar campaigns and marijuana, crossing the boundaries of freedom and dangerous self-indulgence.

The artist is a witness to his times, and the canary in the coal mine. After the Second World War, Abstract Expressionism was blooming in America. It was the first specifically American movement to achieve worldwide influence, putting New York City at the center of the art world. Of course it soon was followed by Pop Art, Fluxus, Conceptual Art and Minimalism, but I was instantly attracted to Abstract Expressionism which seemed to be the best way to freely express my surprise and sadness at witnessing the huge gap between ideas and reality.

Kwang-Young Chun (Korean, b. 1944),
Aggregation 08-AU022 (detail), 2008, mixed
media, 14 ft x 8 ft diameter,
photo courtesy of Aldrich Museum of Art



The juxtaposition of conflicting colors that were tabooed in traditional paintings was encouraged; the brushstrokes themselves proudly emerged on the surface, creating a tension between abstract forms, colors and the canvas. The high tensions burst out all over the canvas, leaving diverse color lumps and wild brushstrokes like the tail of a comet.

Until then, I was used to traditional art classes that forced one to have one's artistic imagination censored by one's teacher, but I soon accepted the freedom of Abstract Expressionism. I wanted to express the conflicts and struggles that were constantly happening between people, or between the past, present and future, though delicately hidden behind a dangerous harmony. Abstract expressionism was the answer to my problem. However, when I started making artworks based on abstract expressionism, I could hear the voice inside my head saying: "This is not wholly yours. Are you not doing it just because others are doing it?"

On a late spring day in 1995, the room was filled with warm sunlight coming through the window. Having been sick with a nasty cold for a few days, I sat in the living room and stared at the water glass and a package of pills that my dear wife had brought for me. I felt the pills through the thin paper package. Suddenly, an old memory came to mind. When I was young, I was a sickly child, and my mother used to take me to the Chinese medicine doctor in the neighborhood. I never liked the place because of the strong odor of infusion, and the threatening sight of the acupuncture needles. While the doctor felt my pulse, my mother held my hand, and I fixed my eyes upon the ceiling, hearing the doctor muttering something to himself. I remember that numerous packages of mulberry paper were hanging from the ceiling, each holding a name card of the medicine wrapped inside. The image of my old memories of the drugstore lasted in my head for a while. I always had a desire to communicate my art through a Korean sentiment, and the image of the medicine packages

hanging from the ceiling became a new theme in my art since that memorable afternoon.

My recent works that grew from the images of the Chinese medicine packages were the essential expression and private documentation of my desire to regard the triangle cells as the minimal unit of information. Each triangle package covered with Korean and Chinese characters was based on various old documents of different times and ideas. The pieces of old documents that were the only means of transferring information at those times were reborn in my hands as the minimal units containing different information.

*~Kwang Young Chun
Excerpts from his Art Talk,
presented at the UW Art Museum,
September 10, 2009*

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will learn about the work of Korean artist Kwang Young Chun. They will learn about his artistic techniques, skills and style. They will learn about how his background relates to the art work he makes.

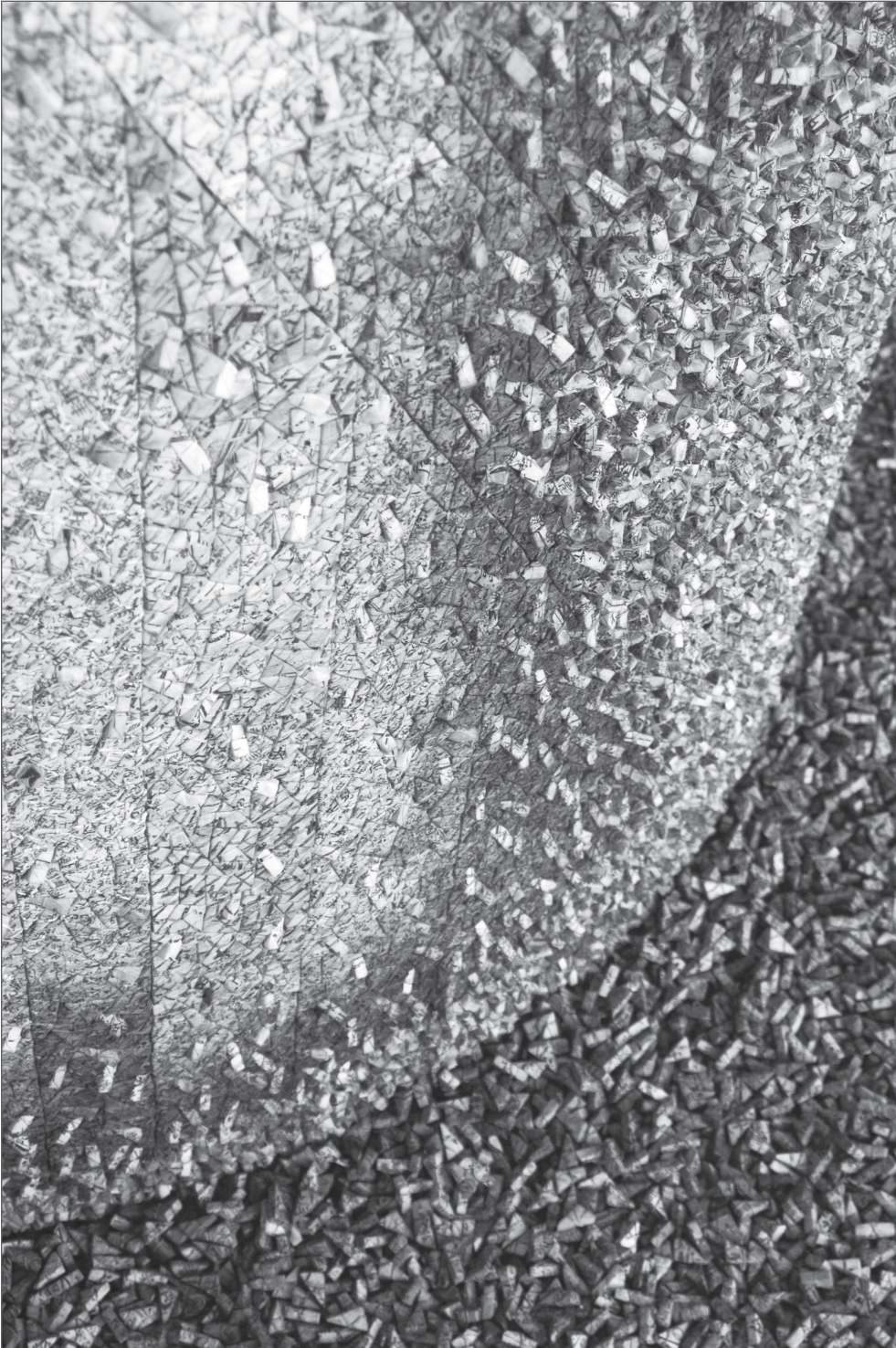
They will explore the connections between his art work and the history and culture of Korea. Students and teachers will consider the concepts behind his art and what those concepts mean to viewers. They will explore ideas generated as the result of viewing his work. They will sketch and draw Chun's *Aggregations*, 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 will explore ways to create their own aggregate works, considering materials, form, texture, and color.

Students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about the work of Kwang Young Chun 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 and

culture influence the work of artists and viewers alike. They will consider what role our memories play in helping define who we are, individually, and collectively.



Kwang-Young Chun (Korean, b. 1944),
Aggregation 08-AU022 (detail), 2008,
mixed media, 14 ft x 8 ft diameter,
photo courtesy of Aldrich Museum of Art

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The following questions will help students better understand Kwang Young Chun's work, and will help begin to make connections between the studies of art and sciences.

GRADES K-6

- What materials are used to make this art?
- What words would you use to describe this art work to a friend?
- Is the paper the artist uses old paper or new paper?
- Is it plain paper or paper that has words or drawings on it?
- Why do you think he uses this paper?
- When did he decide to use this paper?
- What can you learn about Korea by looking at this work?

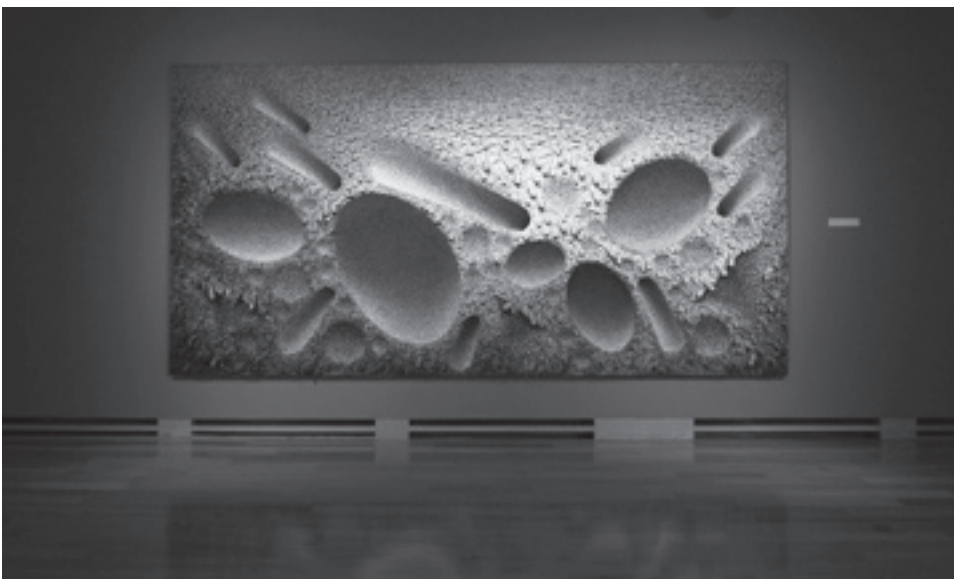
GRADES 7-12

- What does this art make you think about?
- Why is it important that the artist uses recycled paper? Would the work be the same if he used different materials? Explain.
- Chun talks about “bringing the past forward to meet the present” through his work. What do you think he means by this?

- Is it important to know the meaning of the words or letters that are part of the work? Why or why not?
- How important are his personal memories to the creation of this work?
- How important are the collective memories of others to the creation of this work?
- Which do you think is more important — his personal memories, or the memories of other people? Explain.
- Chun has said that for years he created work that “did not convey his own voice.” What do you think he means by that?
- Is this work that someone growing up in Wyoming would or could make? Why or why not?
- When an artist creates work, does it add meaning when they use their own personal experiences and ideas in the art?

ART QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How important are the materials Chun uses to the meaning of his work?
- How do you think he makes the paper the color that he wants it to be?
- Why do you think he adds color?



Installation view of *Aggregation 08-D052* at the UW Art Museum.

- What artistic devices does the artist use (repetition, texture, etc.)?
- What artistic skills does the artist need in order to create this work?
- What other skills or knowledge does the artist need?
- If you could create your own art work that includes memories and ideas that have special meaning for you, what form would it take? What materials would you use to represent your ideas and memories?

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 the country, history and culture of Korea.
- Students research the artist Kwang Young Chun on the internet.
- Students research the process of making paper, including mulberry paper.
- Students research Mulberry trees and its uses.
- Students consider/make a written record of their own important personal memories. They interview friends and family members to see what their most important memories are. They compare and contrast the similarities and differences between personal and collective memories.
- Students define the term “aggregate” and research ways that this word is used (in science, construction, etc.)

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:

- sculpture
- 2-dimensional
- 3-dimensional
- Texture
- Visual texture
- Form
- Aggregate
- Mulberry paper
- Culture or cultural
- Conceptual

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 art work of Kwang Young Chun.
- 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 he creates this art work.
- Students will think about the connections between art, history and culture exhibited here. They may discuss the artist’s use of memories in his art work, the connections he makes to his culture by using mulberry paper, and his use of texture and color to convey meaning and ideas about Korea.

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 the concept of “aggregate” by creating art work that is comprised of many small parts into one whole. Museum educators will work with teachers to determine the materials they wish to use.
- Students will experiment with wrapping other materials in order to explore the transformation that can take place, the skills needed to wrap things in an aesthetically pleasing manner, and the patience required to wrap many objects in order to use them in an art work.
- Students will consider the materials they would use to create art that conveys their own voice, considering personal and collective memories, culture, history, location (where they grew up and live), and more. They will plan (through preliminary drawings, lists of materials they need, and by writing out their ideas) the steps they need to take to create this art piece back in their classroom at school.
- Students will explore different ways to use paper (wrapping, folding, shaping, etc.) to create art.

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 create the art work that they planned in the Shelton Studio, referencing their materials lists, preliminary drawings and ideas written in their sketchbook.



Installation view of *Aggregation 002-MA101B* at the UW Art Museum

- Students may research specific aspects of their culture and write a brief paper that describes what they consider to be their most important findings.
- Students may research other artists whose work deals with cultural memory and events and pull together a presentation on their findings, using a variety of technological approaches (e.g. web searches, Power Point presentations).
- Students may research mulberry paper: how it is made, how it has been used historically and currently, where it is commonly found, etc.
- Students study the chemistry and mathematics underlying the art work: including geometric form and shape, volume, the composition of Styrofoam, the composition of paper, etc.

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM USE

The study of Kwang Young Chun’s *Aggregations* and

the cultural, artistic, historic, and scientific aspects of the exhibit will tie to multiple curricular areas including: the arts, math, sciences, history, English, reading and writing, multicultural studies, world events, 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.

SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Visit the University of Wyoming Art Museum's website (www.uwyo.edu/artmuseum) and blog for more information on the exhibit and the artist.
- http://images.google.com/images?sourceid=navclient&rlz=1T4SUNA_enUS219US220&q=Kwang+Young+Chun&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=O_HdSqPqFob6MIvypOUN&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=4&ved=0CB8QsAQwAw (this is a long URL that brings up an array images and multiple sites for exploring Chun's work).
- http://www.kimfostergallery.com/artists/Chun_bio.htm
- <http://www.kidsgardening.com/paper-pg1.html> (interesting curricular connections to studying papermaking, the history of papermaking, etc.)
- Sculpture in Paper, Nicholas Roukes, Davis Publications, Inc. 1993
- Artistry in Paper, Paul Jackson, Kodansha America, Inc. 2006
- Research the history and culture of Korea, online and at the library.
- Research the work of the abstract expressionists in art history online and at the library. Kwang Young Chun was influenced by abstract expression as an artist.
- Research the composition of Styrofoam and various papers online and at the library.

MATERIALS TO BE SUPPLIED TO EACH STUDENT

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

ASSESSMENT AND 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.