

Kaneko/Sculpture: A Wyoming Invitational
Jun Kaneko

University of Wyoming Art Museum 2008
Gallery and Study Guide

Observe

The first step in understanding any work of art is to take the time to look closely. Here are some questions to consider when looking at the sculpture **Dango by Jun Kaneko**.

Question

- Can you identify the material/s used to make this sculpture?
- What draws you to look more closely at this sculpture - colors, textures, lines, marks, light, shadow, shapes and forms?
- The artist calls this form a *dango* - which means Japanese dumpling. Why do you think he calls it that?
- How would you describe the lines and patterns and forms that you see?
- Does Kaneko use one line or many lines to cover the surface of the dango? How can you tell?
- Can you identify the concepts behind the sculpture you are viewing? How are those concepts represented in the sculpture?
- Does this sculpture speak to you? Do you feel anything for the dango?
- Does it make you think of something you have never thought of before?
- What is it persuading you to think about or to do?
- What else about the art created makes you think or feel something?

Explore and Reflect

- What is three-dimensional art?
- How are two-dimensional and three-dimensional art different and the same?
- What qualities make three-dimensional art unique?
- Consider the sculptor's choice of materials along with scale, size, balance, proportion, form, structure, space.
- What is art?
- Is it an idea? A process? A product? All three?
- What is a concept?
- How does an artist take a concept and create art from it?
- Why do we make art?
- How do we find our creative processes?
- Do our human needs and wants motivate this process?
- Is it in response to personal thoughts and desires?
- How does a viewer recognize a concept in the artwork by observing it?
- What are examples of concepts?
- How does the sculpture you are viewing express ideas?
- Can viewing art and thinking about the concepts behind any artwork change the viewer's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings? How so?
- What do we mean by *style* when we speak of art?
- How does this work present the culture, the social and political climate of today? How so?

About the Sculptor

Jun Kaneko (Japanese-American, b. 1942)

Kaneko is a prolific artist. In addition to the dangos*, his ceramic works range from relatively small tiles, slabs and sculpture to monumental, commissioned walls and installations. Throughout his career, drawing has been the elemental mainstay that informs his work, not as sketches, but as individual investigations of material resulting in complete works. He says, "In drawing, each piece of paper behaves so differently. I'm sensitive about the thickness of paper, the density, how it moves with absorption of ink and water, which is a unique problem in Japanese calligraphy. Rice paper absorbs water right away. All this distinctly affects your attitude of mark making."

*dango – a monumentally large, gaily painted and patterned ceramic sculpture – is Jun Kaneko's distinctive contribution to contemporary art and, no less importantly, to modern life. The term, at once ironic and affectionate, means "dumpling" in Japanese. It refers in part to the comfortable shapes of the gigantesque dangos, but it also associates them with pleasure and deliciousness, not just despite but because of their daunting scale: the largest dangos are 11 feet high! The dangos' mission is to brighten the heart and lift the spirit of doors, in gardens or courtyards, parks and public spaces, where they share sky and air with ordinary men and women who cannot have too much of the color and innocence they radiate.