

WE CAN MAKE ANOTHER FUTURE JAPANESE ART AFTER 1989

TEACHER NOTES

GALLERY OF MODERN ART
UNTIL 20 SEPTEMBER 2015

This resource focuses on selected artists featured in the exhibition 'We can make another future: Japanese art after 1989' and is to be used in conjunction with the Curriculum Reference Points: Visual Arts. An accompanying Student Worksheet is available at www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/education/resources/current

To learn more about the exhibition visit:

Exhibition webpage: www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/wecanmakeanotherfuture

QAGOMA TV: <http://tv.qagoma.qld.gov.au/>

KOHEI NAWA

JAPAN B.1975

Kohei Nawa was born in Osaka and now lives and works in Kyoto, where he is Associate Professor at Kyoto University of Art and Design. As a sculptor, Nawa is interested in forms and surfaces and how they interact to become objects. He is fascinated by how we navigate and understand objects in the virtual world via the internet. To create his artworks, he enters keywords into online search engines and conceives of sculptures based on the images that are returned. He then sources taxidermied animals from online auction sites and covers them with glass and resin beads of varying sizes.

Concepts

- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Perceptual shifts
- ▶ Structural form
- ▶ Virtual reality
- ▶ Shape shifting/distortion
- ▶ Camouflage.

Nawa is fascinated with how we gather information from our environment using the senses of sight and touch. His sculptures — including *PixCell-Double Deer#4* 2010 — are designed to destabilise our understanding of what is real and what is virtual. By focusing on the outer layer, skin or epidermis of animals, he draws attention to how we identify with the world.

Classroom activity suggestions

Foundation to Year 6

To create a collage, find an image of an animal or person from a magazine. Students are to cut up a range of bubble wrap plastics and use the different-sized bubbles as a layer through which to view their subjects. Ask the students to print a close-up digital photograph of their collage. Compare this printed image with the original collage. Give each work a title.

Year 7 to 12

Complete the above activity. Ask students to appraise the two images in a short written statement explaining which image is more effective.

YAYOI KUSAMA

JAPAN B.1929

Yayoi Kusama is one of the most significant artists to emerge from Asia in the postwar period. As a 12-year-old child, she had already begun to paint her hallucinations, which she experienced as veils of dots. During the early 1950s, Kusama recognised that the visual and aural hallucinations she had experienced for a decade were symptomatic of a condition known as *riijin'sho* (depersonalisation syndrome). As an adult, Kusama developed a distinctive visual iconography using these dots, which often translated as nets or auras. Kusama moved to New York in 1955, where she lived and worked until 1972, before returning to Japan.

Concepts

- ▶ Infinity
- ▶ Spirituality
- ▶ Astronomy
- ▶ Repetition.

Kusama's practice is grounded in a repetitive, obsessive manner of working, with the net and the dot being the iconic motifs in her work. Her 'Infinity/Mirror rooms', such as *Soul under the moon* 2002, are architectural, three-dimensional expressions of Kusama's 'Infinity net' paintings, and they offer audiences the opportunity to physically enter the artist's personal visual reality. The immersive installation involving the endless repetition of dots of colour defies the logic of our senses and plays with our perceptions of space and infinity.

Classroom activity suggestions

Foundation to Year 6

Ask students to experiment with mirrors to see if they can arrange them to create a kind of infinity. A kaleidoscope uses mirrors to create an infinite number of patterns and shapes. Give students the opportunity to experiment with a kaleidoscope (or a virtual one) to see how these patterns are created.

Year 7 to 12

Invite the class to create a collaborative installation using coloured dots to decorate an area in the school. Extend the invitation to other students to contribute to the space. Create a collaborative installation inspired by the concept of infinity.

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

JAPAN/UNITED STATES B.1948

Hiroshi Sugimoto was born in Tokyo, where he completed his first degree at Rikkyo University. In 1970, he moved to Los Angeles to complete his Master of Fine Arts. In the United States, Sugimoto began working in photography, developing a serial, minimalist style. In 1974 he moved to New York, where he currently lives. Sugimoto is interested in how photographic images convey a sense of ritual. Although they look identical, the images in *Hall of Thirty-Three Bays (nos 1–24)* 1995 are distinctly different. Their tiny variations invite the viewer to contemplate the concept of infinity.

Concepts

- ▶ Photography
- ▶ Minimalism
- ▶ Repetition
- ▶ Infinity.

Sugimoto captures the 1000 Bodhisattva sculptures through high-resolution monochromatic photography. The mesmeric effect achieved in these photographs mirrors the devotional aspects of the deity itself. A notion of infinity is made physical by the sheer scale of the repetition achieved by the 1000 figures. The work articulates both the immense otherworldly beauty of the sculptures and the intriguing spiritual presence unique to each deity, allowing the viewer to engage in the intricate and the infinite.

Classroom activity suggestions

Foundation to Year 6

Ask students to explore the ways they can use repetition to convey infinity. They might like to create patterns using reflective objects, like aluminium foil, or an installation using metallic objects, such as mirrors and cutlery.

Year 7 to 12

Invite students to produce a picture exploring the infinite by creating a digital image that repeats the original through copying, pasting and rotating. Consider using kaleidoscope filters in digital imaging software like Photo Booth.

SHIGEO TOYA

JAPAN B.1947

Shigeo Toya graduated from Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts in 1975. Artists of his generation immediately succeeded the important Japanese art movement known as Mono-ha (the school of things). Mono-ha rejected the prevailing conventions of Western-style expressionism in painting and sculpture in favour of an unconditional acceptance of the world as it is. In turn, Toya rejected the strict literalism of his predecessors. Toya's rendering of the landscape and his personal links to its use technique and form to reference the strength and resilience of the natural world, as well as its inherent violence.

Concepts

- ▶ Repetition
- ▶ Balance
- ▶ Spirituality.

Toya's work goes beyond chiselling the wooden surface. Drawing from Japanese woodcarving traditions, which emphasise the life of materials by leaving carving marks as evidence, Toya uses a chainsaw to cut into wood to create ragged surfaces. Through the clarity of his technique, the beauty of the materials and the intensity of the artist's feeling, the spirit of these sculptures is made manifest. *Woods III* 1991–92 communicates not only a sense of space, but also the spirituality inherent in nature.

Classroom activity suggestions

Foundation to Year 6

Each student is to create a painting, drawing or collage of their special place. Students are to then make their artwork into a flat template to create a 3D object. Inspired by Toya's installation, each student's artwork could be arranged to form a grid-like installation.

Year 7 to 12

Using a range of timber-based materials (e.g. pencils, paddle pop sticks, balsawood), invite students to use adhesive and carving techniques to create miniature sculptures. Ensure each miniature has a flat and stable base. Students should then apply diluted white acrylic paint to their sculptures to reflect the uniformity of Toya's artwork.

LEE UFAN

SOUTH KOREA/JAPAN B.1936

Born in Korea, Lee Ufan moved to Japan at the age of 20, completing a degree in modern Western philosophy. In the late 1960s, Lee Ufan's search for ways to express his ideas led to his involvement in the formation of the Mono-ha movement (the school of things). Mono-ha, which changed the course of contemporary Japanese art, aimed to shift the focus of art from European and American avant-gardism to an alternative point of view focused on non-Western perspectives. Lee Ufan has built a career as a critical and activist artist, and also as a writer and philosopher. These disciplines all continue to be vital and related components in the artist's practice.

Concepts

- ▶ Balance
- ▶ Infinity.

Lee Ufan's interest in philosophy is revealed in the meditative and concentrated nature of his work. In his paintings, he creates series of brushstrokes or marks in correspondence with each other, as well as with the open space surrounding them. Works such as *With Winds* 1990 are not busy, nor are they empty — rather, a calm sense of balance is observed. In his practice, Lee Ufan explores the interrelatedness of objects and ideas, consciousness and existence.

Classroom activity suggestions

Foundation to Year 6

Discuss Lee Ufan's use of line. Students can explore line by creating two paintings — one with white paint on black paper and one with black paint on white paper. Provide thick and thin brushes for the exercise. Encourage students to look at the interaction between the different lines on the paper.

Year 7 to 12

Ask students to use a number of simple cut-out shapes to create a balanced arrangement on a paper background. By adding or removing shapes, the dynamics of the composition will change. Ask students to transform their compositions into paintings.