



ON VIEW: August 6, 2016 – March 12, 2017

Exhibition Resource Guide

Please note, this exhibition contains some stylized nudity. If this is a concern, please contact the Education Department to see examples of the work and determine if the content is appropriate for your students.

This exhibition is a fifty-five year retrospective of the work of the local Danish-born American artist Erik Gronborg (b. 1931). Gronborg is best-known for his work with playful and colorful ceramics inspired by his environment. This project emphasizes the full range of his output, placing ceramics within a surprisingly broad creative practice that includes sculpture, furniture making, drawing, and printmaking.

EXHIBITION THEMES

Fine Art vs. Craft

Some of Gronborg's ceramics and furniture, as well as his domestic environment blur the distinctions between functional and useful objects (craft) and art that has no utilitarian function ("fine" art). Gronborg plays with these questions, blurring the line and challenging these concepts, giving many of his objects of use a dynamic quality.

World Class Artist

Gronborg is known worldwide for his playful yet technically sophisticated ceramics. His work of this type, typically hand-built with brilliant, colorful glazes, can be found in major museum collections from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to the Smithsonian Institution and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, among many others.

Experimentation

Throughout his artistic process, he responds to the qualities of the material in a spontaneous way, partly influenced by Abstract Expressionist painters and sculptors. Instead of realizing a totally preconceived idea, Gronborg allows imperfections and accidents to play an active role in the process and the ultimate form.

Identity

Danish-born, Gronborg's personality, ideas, thoughts and influences are hinted at throughout the scope of his work. As a University of California Berkeley student in the 1960's, Gronborg studied with Peter Voulkos and observed his Abstract Expressionist approach to ceramics. When he first started making ceramics, Gronborg worked through the powerful influence of Voulkos as he developed his own distinctive voice.

Gronborg's own thoughts and political leanings are recognizable as he came of age in the 1960s, when he began making handmade pottery that fused Pop Art and political commentary. Once settled in San Diego, Gronborg began creating furniture using local Avocado wood and drawing inspiration for his work from his own home, garden and family.

STUDENTS WILL EXPLORE:

- The retrospective work of one San Diego artist, across different time periods, mediums and processes
- The difference between fine art (non-utilitarian) and craft (utilitarian), and works in which these two areas intersect
- How personal identity, heritage, environment and interests intersect to create complex works of art with layered personal meaning
- The use of artistic experimentation and innovation to create uniquely formed works of art that address complex engineering and construction challenges



Desk

Erik Gronborg, 1978
Avocado wood
Collection of the Artist
Photo by Katie Gardner



Lidded Container

Erik Gronborg, 1980
Stoneware, low fire lead glazes
Collection of Ron Werner and Scott McCoy
Photo by Chip Morton



Untitled (Head Series)

Erik Gronborg, c. 1963
Cast iron and wood
Private Collection
Photo by Chip Morton



Plate

Erik Gronborg, c. 1969
Stoneware, low fire lead glazes
Collection of the Artist
Photo by Chip Morton

ERIK GRONBORG'S WORK IN WOOD

Joinery and Cross-Sections

Erik Gronborg uses traditional **joinery** in order to create furniture out of wood. The different pieces of wood are carefully joined together like puzzle pieces. Carefully planned joinery and a little bit of glue are the only components used for attaching one piece to the next. There are no staples or nails used to keep the wood together. In this exhibition you will find many examples of joinery in the wood furniture and sculpture. Imagine how the artist planned this functional design.

Many of Erik Gronborg's work in wood involve **cross-sections**, which shows what the inside of the wood looks like after a cut has been made across it. Some pieces seem to be sliced off or cut in half. Many surfaces are created with a single cut from the saw blade. For example, in this piece to the right it appears to have been created and then a portion chopped off.



JOINERY AND CROSS-SECTION ART ACTIVITY

Erik Gronborg's crows are another example of both joinery and cross sections. Each section of the crow is represented by one flat cross section and then pieced together with simple joinery.

In this project students will use cardstock to create an animal sculpture utilizing drawing skills and simple joinery techniques.



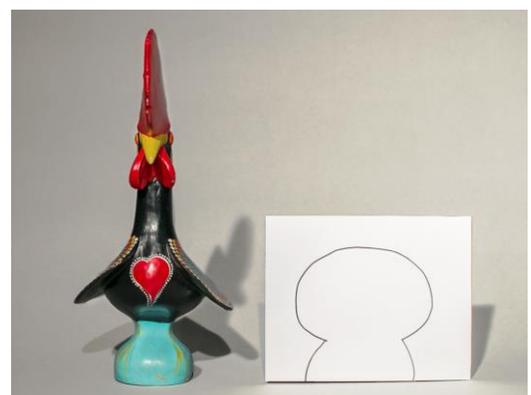
Materials:

- Cardstock or cardboard
- Pencils
- Scissors
- A three-dimensional animal object or pictures of an animal from various perspectives.

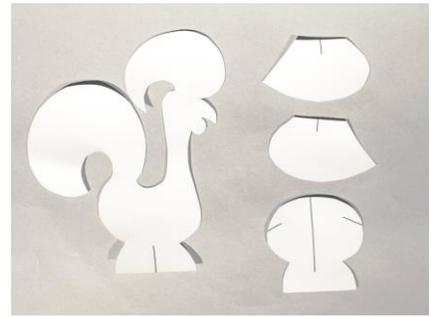
Directions:

Choose an object such as an animal to create.

1. Look at the animal from one point of view and outline the main body of the animal.
2. Look at the object from the front and outline the main body frame again. This will be the foundation of your animal.
3. Continue to change your viewpoint and outline other parts of the body such as the arms, legs and head. Repeat until all aspects of the animal are represented.



4. Now that your outlines are complete, cut them out.
5. Now work on the joinery cuts. Start with your main body frame parts and figure out how you want them to line up. To make a joint, cut a longer slit into one of the cut outs and slip it onto the other one. In the secondary piece, cut a smaller slit where you want to join it.
6. Continue until all pieces are joined together.
7. Add more details, such as fingers, toes or ears once you get the hang of it, or draw it directly on the piece.



STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Investigate

2nd VA:Cr2.1.2a Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design.

5th VA:Cr2.2.5a Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment.

Reflect

2nd VA:Cr3.1.2a Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork.

6th VA:Cr3.1.6a Reflect on whether personal artwork conveys the intended meaning and revise accordingly.

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARD

2-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

- Building upon the idea of diversity in animals. List and describe the anatomy of the animal created in this project. Compare and contrast the diversity amongst the different animals. Group the animals based on habitat and support your decisions.

CALIFORNIA COMMON CORE STANDARDS: English Language Arts Standards » Science & Technical Subjects » Grade 6-8 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.9

Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video, or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.

- In this activity students have many opportunities to solve problems. The scientific method is naturally called into play during the planning and testing stages of this project. Enhance the learning in this standard with a demonstration, video and reading followed by comparing the new information gained with the experiment.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT IDEAS:

Inner/Outer Circle – a great way to share ideas with different partners; two circles (one inner, one outer) of students face each other, one circle moves with same question or a new one. Use the following questions or prompts.

- Share and point out all the areas where joinery was used.
- Recall and share the perspectives that were used in creating the piece.

Jigsaw/Experts in Residence – Students group their final pieces based on commonalities in the anatomy of the animal. Each group becomes an expert and shares their supporting statements as to why they felt their animals should be grouped together then debriefs the whole group. Students regroup based on similarities in shape and line and again share their reasoning with larger group.

IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR VISIT

Schedule a Museum visit and Docent-led tour through the Education Department. Mingei offers free admission for all K-12th grade and college groups and transportation reimbursements for Title 1 schools.

Email: sfoley@mingei.org

Call: 619-704-7495

Complete an online tour request form: www.mingei.org/education/museum-tour-request

- Review the information in this hand-out with your students; build their knowledge, excitement and confidence before they arrive.
- Discuss museum etiquette and review the Tour Guidelines document that will be sent to you when your tour is confirmed.
- Explain to students that a Museum Docent will guide them through the exhibition. Explain that a Docent is a knowledgeable Museum-trained volunteer who will share valuable information with them.
- Explain that Mingei International is a museum of folk art, craft and design that shows work from all over the world, and that “*mingei*” is a Japanese word that means “art of the people.”

