Personal Seal Design

Using a unique mark to signify that you made something or that it belongs to you is a universal concept. Whether it is writing a signature or drawing a special symbol, artists find different ways to show ownership of their work.

For this project you will draw inspiration from the many different seals in the USC Pacific Asia Museum collection and create your own unique seal using a potato.

*Note: This activity requires adult help and uses sharp tools

Flat square bronze seal with perforated knob on the top, China, late 19th c. (1981.33.15)

What is a seal?
A seal is a carved stamp used as a signature. In East and Southeast Asia many families owned seals. There were also seals for government offices, royalty, companies, and artists. Seals were custom ordered and made out of materials such as wood, stone, jade, or ivory. In some places, seals are still used today to legitimize documents.

Prompts for Looking at Art:

Take a look at the images of seals below and think about the following:

- What is similar about the three seals?
- What differences do you notice between them?
- What do you think these seals could have been used for? What makes you think that?
Questions to Inspire Your Artwork:
- How do you like to personalize your belongings?
- What is a symbol or word that you think represents you?
- Are there any symbols that are important to you or your family?

Materials Needed:
- Potato
- Knife
- Marker (such as Sharpie)
- Paint (tempra or acrylic)
- Cutting board
- Paper
- Paper towel or tissue

Instructions:

Step 1
Cut the potato in half. On one half, draw your symbol or signature with a felt-tip marker. Use both sides of the potato to make two seals.

*Important Note: When printing your stamp on paper, the image will be reversed (backwards). Keep that in mind when making your design
**Step 2**
Very carefully, and with the help of an adult, cut away at the area around your design, leaving your design slightly raised. The best knife to use would be a small paring knife. If you are doing a more complicated design, try using a utility knife.

**Step 3**
After the design is carved, dry the area with a paper towel to make sure your potato seal is not too wet.

**Step 4**
Next, dip your seal into some paint (or brush it on). Blot away any excess paint on a scrap piece of paper or paper towel before you begin stamping.
Step 5
Use your seal stamp to sign an artwork, a note to a friend, or print a pattern on paper!

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