

Heirloom Zine

Grades - 6-12 (with modifications for elementary)

Time - 2 class periods

Essential Questions

- How do objects gain meaning and value? How do they lose it?
- What makes something an heirloom? Who decides?
- What in your life today could become an heirloom in the future?
- What meaning might your heirloom take in a parallel universe?

Key Concepts/Vocabulary/Art Elements

Heirloom, zine, installation, deaccession, narrative, parallel universe, mixed media

Materials

8.5" x 11" paper, scissors, stapler, drawing and collage materials, such as: pencils, pens, markers, crayons, colored pencils, magazine images, construction paper scraps, glue stick

Artwork in Focus

Alan Nakagawa

tamashiP galactic, 2021

Mixed media: video, sound, paint, wood, metal, canvas, customized shoes, t shirts, adhesive stickers, audio cassette tape, songwriting, mannequins and dolls

Talking About Art

As part of the special exhibition *INTERVENTION: Fresh Perspectives after 50 Years*, seven artists were invited to explore the USC Pacific Asia Museum's collection of over 15,000 objects and create original artwork in response. Each artist took a different approach to this challenge. Some created paintings and sculptures while others made artwork out of fibers and fabric to express their connection to the objects in the museum. A few of the artists created what are called *installations*. An **installation** is an artwork that uses the entire space of a room or given area and can include a variety of media and materials.

Take a close look at the images of Alan Nakagawa's installation titled *tamashiP galactic*, 2021. What do you notice? What are some of the different items that fill the space? What do you notice about the colors and lighting in the room? Do you notice any recurring patterns or figures? Are any of the items familiar to you? Which items are unfamiliar?

Nakagawa was interested in the over 2,000 objects in the museum that are waiting to be removed from the collection, or **deaccessioned**. Objects like this exist in almost all museums and there are various

reasons why they are not wanted, such as inauthenticity, quality, or lack of space to house them. They were often acquired prior to the existence of registration systems, which keep track of everything from titles, year of creation, who donated it, and how much it is worth. Nakagawa calls these “orphan objects” and it made him sad to think that no one wanted these potentially historic artworks at the museum anymore. He compares it to not having documentation and therefore not having permanent residency in a place.

For his artwork, Nakagawa imagined what it would be like if these objects traveled on a spaceship to a **parallel universe** in which they were wanted and beloved. In science fiction, a parallel universe is a world that coexists with and has certain similarities to our world but is different from it in some fundamental way. “tamashiP galactic” is a fictitious sci-fi movie about an attempt to save the “souls” of the “orphan objects” of every museum on our earth. The installation includes a narrative script, spaceship, video, movie swag, dolls of the main character named Sarcie, and a dozen original songs. The room also features a display of some of the “orphan objects” the artist found in the USC Pacific Asia Museum.

With a partner, discuss the following questions and write down your answers to share out with the class:

- Who decides if an object is meaningful or valuable?
- How does an object lose meaning or value?
- Can you think of anything that has lost meaning or value over time? What is it and why? (this can be a personal item or something that many people viewed as valuable at a certain time but no longer do)

Now, think about how objects end up in museum collections to begin with. They are often donated by collectors who accumulate many things over time. In some cases, these things are family **heirlooms**. An heirloom is an object that is passed down from generation to generation within a family. It usually has special meaning or value to the family members and can be anything, such as a piece of jewelry, item of clothing, artwork, photographs, dishes, toys, or musical instruments. A family member may choose to donate it to a museum so that it is preserved for years to come and enjoyed by people from around the world. There are many cases, however, of objects being removed without permission from local people and eventually ending up in museums through collectors. These donation and collection practices are problematic and have come to light in recent years for museums to resolve.

Perhaps some of the “orphan objects” donated to the USC Pacific Asia Museum were someone’s heirlooms and by donating them they hoped to preserve them for generations to come. Consider that as you move on to the art activity below.

Creating Art

Think about an object in your or a family member’s home that is considered an heirloom. Where did it come from? How do you/they end up owning it? Why is it valuable to you and/or your family? How is it

displayed, stored, or taken care of? Talk to the people who currently own it to get answers to these questions.

Now, you will create a zine about this object. A **zine** is a small, self-published booklet used by artists, writers, poets, and activists to share their ideas. It is like a mini-magazine which can be photocopied and shared with friends and community members. It uses simple materials, like paper, drawing, and collage, which makes it an accessible art form. Today, some artists share their zines digitally but many still prefer the printed versions. Learn more about the history of zine-making and explore zines by Alan Nakagawa in the resources section below.

To make your zine, take an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper and fold it in half along the short side (hamburger style), then cut along the folded line. Next, place the two pieces together and fold in half again, creating a booklet with four pages. You can add more pages as needed. You may staple together along the binding edge at the very end.

The inside of your zine can be used as a space to document your heirloom object and its story. Make a detailed drawing of the object on one page and use the other page to write about the significance of the object using the questions above as a guide. You can write in a narrative format, creating a story about the object, or even write a poem.

You can include more than one object in your zine by asking family members and friends to share images and stories of their special objects with you. You can also include an item that is yours which you hope will be an heirloom for future generations of your family someday. It can be a special toy from when you were younger, something you made, a favorite book, or a special gift you received from a friend. Fill your zine with stories of objects you hope will be remembered one day. Be sure to include a cover page and your name.

When you are done, share one of your object stories with the class.

Extension Activities

Try some of these ideas to expand on the project:

- Photocopy the zine, making enough copies for everyone in your class, and have a zine exchange.
- Scan or photograph the zines of every student (or one object/page per student) and combine them into a community zine to be shared digitally. The images can be put together using a platform like Google Jamboard or a Powerpoint slide show.
- Imagine turning your zine into an installation, similar to Alan Nakagawa's. How would you share the stories of your heirlooms using space? Create a 3D model, such as a shoebox diorama, with your installation idea. Would you include any special features, such as audio, video, or light? Write a short essay explaining your idea to go with the model.

- Research how objects end up in museums and write an essay analyzing historically problematic practices and more recent best practices for museum collecting. Make connections to social studies and history curriculum by focusing on objects from a specific time period and place of origin that end up somewhere else, such as objects from the Americas that end up in European or US museums.

Grade Level Modifications

Early Elementary - Students can draw and describe an object that is special to them, such as a toy, book, or blanket. It can be done with one piece of paper folded in half and they can write in short sentences why the item is important to them. Everyone's page can be photocopied or scanned to be made into a printed or digital zine of things that are special to the students in the class and thus be an heirloom that memorializes what is special to them at that age.

Upper Elementary - Students can imagine what would happen to their favorite object or family heirloom in a parallel universe and create their zine by illustrating and writing that story.

Reflection Questions

- Did you learn anything new about your family by talking to them about the heirloom object?
- What do you think the item you chose to be a future heirloom says about you?
- Imagine the object/s from your zine in a parallel universe. What meaning might be gained or lost?
- Do you think it is important to hold on to objects? What are some reasons you hold on to certain objects?

Curricular Connections

California State Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Guiding Outcomes #4-8:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BwQOoa7XUAT1KY_uoHku2yJwq-7DtNQ9/edit

CCSS for ELA - Writing, Speaking and Listening

6-8.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types)

9-12.3 - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

6-8.1- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6-8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Art

Creating

6th - VA:Cr1.1.6a - Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.

7th - VA:Cr3.1.7a - Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.

Presenting

8th - VA:Pr5.1.8a - Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme based artwork for display, and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer.

Responding

6th - VA:Re.7.1.6a - Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.

6th - VA:Re.7.2.6a - Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

9-12th - VA:Cn11.1.1a - Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

Resources

- *tamashiP galactic*, 2021 process documentation
<https://www.alannakagawa.com/#/tamaship-galactic-usc-pam-2021/>
- Video documentation of *tamashiP galactic*, 2021
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHv--8EttgyII5P-2W8fNpQ>
- *tamashiP galactic*, 2021 - Soundtrack
<https://tamashipgalactic.bandcamp.com/track/horizons-ring>
- INTERVENTION: Fresh Perspectives after 50 Years - mini artist documentaries
<https://pacificasiamuseum.usc.edu/intervention-video-interviews/>
- Alan Nakagawa's Zines
<https://www.alannakagawa.com/2015-night-zine-1/tnvxya97ailopii97soqh3ehxwz2o>
- Visiting Artist Radio Show - Curriculum by Alan Nakagawa
<https://www.alannakagawa.com/visitings-radio-show>
- Zine history and Processes
<https://thepublicstudio.ca/files/DIY-No2-Zines.pdf>

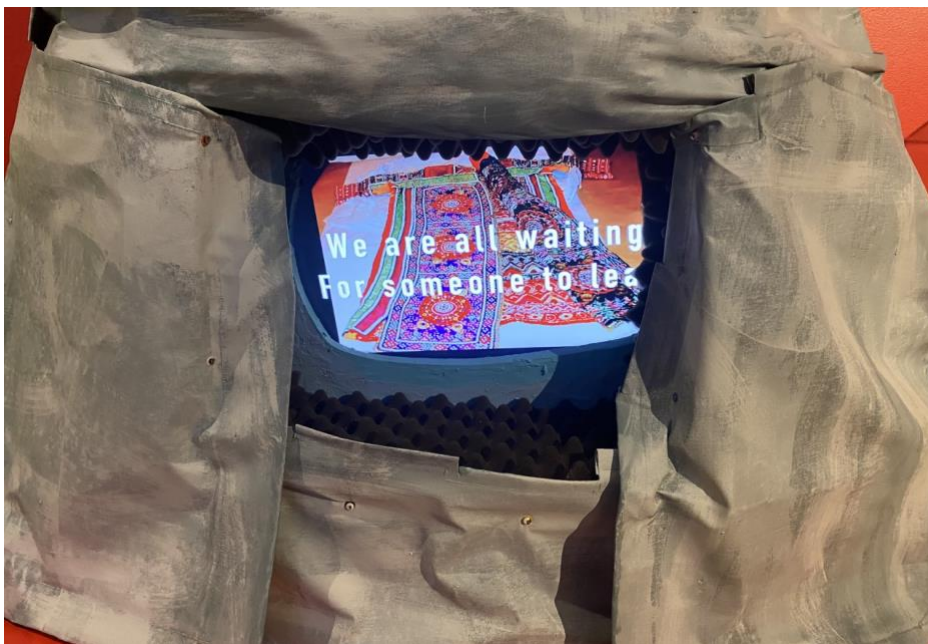
Educator Night@PAM, Fall 2021 lesson designed by Alan Nakagawa in collaboration with USC Pacific Asia Museum
Education Staff



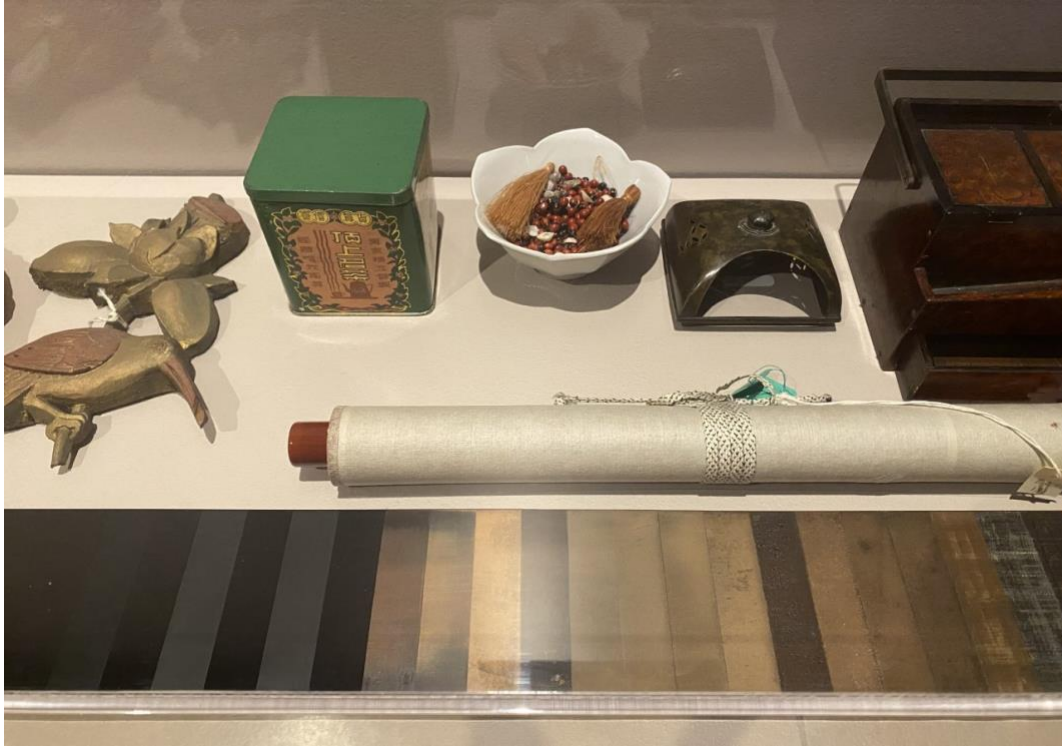
Installation view of *tamashiP galactic*, 2021



Sarcie dolls and movie swag display



Video compilation of USC PAM objects with original soundtrack



“Orphan Objects” from USC PAM Collection featured in installation