FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT & THE ART OF JAPAN

GRADE: 1-5, Middle School, High School
TIME: 30 MINUTES

This looking activity introduces participants to the American designer and architect, Frank Lloyd Wright and the inspiration he found from Japanese artwork. As participants examine Wright’s work alongside examples of Japanese art, they will be challenged to discuss the design elements they see and interpret the relationship between the two.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Art & Social Studies

MATERIALS | RESOURCES
Examples of Frank Lloyd Wright’s work
Examples of Japanese designs and artwork
Sketchbooks

Optional:

OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese artwork.
2. Develop visual literacy and the ability to verbally discuss artwork.
3. Challenge the concepts of influence and originality.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be influenced by something? How is this different from appropriation?
2. Can two things look similar but not be influenced by one another?
EXPLORE

• Present examples of Frank Lloyd Wright’s work alongside examples of Japanese art. Find images and background information available at: https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/wright-and-japan/ and https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/.

  Example suggestions for Wright’s work:
  - Unity Temple
  - Midway Gardens
  - Home and Studio Playroom Mural
  - Robie House living room laylight screens
  - Hills-DeCaro House
  - Frank Thomas House

  Example suggestions for Japanese artwork:
  - Red Fuji, Hokusai’s series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji
  - The Great Wave off Kanagawa, Hokusai’s series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji
  - Phoenix Pavilion from the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition
  - Irises, Ogata Korin, early 18th century
  - Kasuri textiles
  - The Great Wooden Stage of Kiyomizu-dera
  - Wind Blown Grass Across the Moon, Hiroshige

Additional Resource: Freer & Sackler Gallery available at: https://www.freersackler.si.edu

ENGAGE

• Encourage participants to sketch and take notes throughout discussion.

• During discussion have participants consider:
  
  DESIGN ELEMENTS: What do you notice first? What effect does it have? How is it used? Are any design elements the same? What are the dominant design elements? Are these similar in Wright’s work and in the examples of Japanese work? If the same design elements are present, are they used in the same way? (https://www.teachingbydesign.org/design-elements/elements-of-design/)

  THEME: What themes are present in the various designs? What design elements are used to illustrate or convey the themes? Are the themes universal?

  INFLUENCE: Looking at examples of each, can we determine if Japanese art influenced Wright’s work? How do we know? If two works look alike is it safe to assume one influenced the other? Can artists create and design without influence of any kind? What role do the works of artists and designers before us play in our own work?

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

• After discussion, have participants write a brief statement about the role influence, or inspiration, plays in artmaking.