

# MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

## Blown Ink Forest Scapes Inspired by Etsuko Ichikawa

A HANDS-ON ART  
ACTIVITY DESIGNED BY  
MONA EDUCATORS

### Description

Inspired by the art of Etsuko Ichikawa, students will use a straw to blow ink to create unique paintings. They will use chalk pastels to create textures, organic shapes, and color in their forest scapes.

**Age:** Fourth through sixth grades

**Lesson Duration:** Three sessions of 45-minutes each

**Subjects:** Art, Design & Science



*Image: Educator example  
Image source: Museum of Northwest Art*

### Materials

- Sumi-e ink
- Straws
- Chalk pastels
- White paper
- Example of Etsuko Ichikawa's art (included in this lesson)
- Optional: Sumi-e, the Art of Simplistic Elegance (PBS video).
- Optional: pencil and sketchpad for forest walk

# Instructions

## **First Session (45 minutes)**

- 1) Show students Etsuko Ichikawa's art (included at the end of the lesson) and use VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to study the work.
  - VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS and a biography of the artist are included at the end of this lesson.
- 2) Introduce students to the concept of Sumi-e in Japanese art. You may wish to share a portion of this [PBS video called Sumi-e, the Art of Simplistic Elegance](#).
- 3) Optional: Take students for a walk into the forest if one is accessible to you. Have them sketch the organic shapes they see and encourage them to notice how different shaped plants overlap each other and fill in all the forest space.

## **Second session (45 minutes)**

- 1) Begin with a review of your discussion from the previous session.
- 2) Demonstrate blowing the ink across the paper with a straw. Show students the most effective blowing technique (slow and steady with the straw close to the paper) to get the ink to spread to create branches. Make sure to stop and take a breath between each blowing session. Wherever the ink is wet you can create extra branches.
- 3) Pass out paper and straws and put two ink spots on the paper where the student would like the tree to begin. If they need practice, let them do a version on scrap paper.
- 4) Give students time to blow their trees and add more ink spots if they need them. Students can add as many trees as they'd like. Let the art dry before the next session.

## **Third session (45 minutes)**

- 1) Demonstrate chalk pastel techniques such as blocking (holding the chalk sideways to fill in large areas) and hatching (using the edge of the chalk to create textures).
- 2) Pass out chalk pastels and let students add plants etc. in the foreground using organic shapes. Encourage students to overlap colors and use hatching to create textures.
- 3) Next, students can work on the background. It may help to talk about proportion and how things are smaller and less clear in the background. Use blocking to fill in color and overlap to mix colors. Challenge students to leave no white on the paper.
- 4) If time, use some of the reflection questions on the next page to lead a discussion.

## Vocabulary

- ✓ Positive space
- ✓ Negative space
- ✓ Organic shape
- ✓ Texture
- ✓ Foreground
- ✓ Background
- ✓ Hatching
- ✓ Blocking
- ✓ Layering color
- ✓ Variety
- ✓ Proportion

## Reflection

Discuss with students:

- Were you able to create different textures using the chalk pastels
- Did you create an illusion of foreground and background?

Take a gallery walk around the classroom and look at each other's artwork.

## Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- Fourth Grade: VA:Cr2.1.4 (Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches)
- Fifth Grade: VA:Cr2.1.5 (Experiment and develop skills in multiple art making techniques and approaches through practice)
- Sixth Grade: VA:Cr2.1.6 (Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design)

# About the Artist: Etsuko Ichikawa

Etsuko Ichikawa is a Seattle-based multi-media artist, who was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. She moved to the U.S to attend Pilchuck Glass School in 1993. Her work has been shown all over the world and she has received numerous grants and awards. Ichikawa makes art in a range of media, such as drawing, sculpture, installation, performance, film, poetry, and socially engaged art. In addition to making art, she works as a filmmaker and an activist focused on the environment and world peace.



*Etsuko Ichikawa*

*Image source: [etsukoichikawa.com/about/](https://etsukoichikawa.com/about/)*

**"I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN TOKYO AND HAVE LIVED IN SEATTLE FOR OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. MY WORK IS A REFLECTION OF MYSELF IN THESE TWO DISTINCTIVELY DIFFERENT CULTURES."**

**-ETSUKO ICHIKAWA**

# Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development, including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art, encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

*What's going on in this picture?*

*What do you see that makes you say...?*

*What more can you find?*

## Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to use in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: [www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators](http://www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators)



*Glass Pyrograph on paper, 26 h x 13 w x 1d feet, 2008,  
Photo: Robert J. Pennington  
Image source: [artisttrust.org/artists/etsuko-ichikawa/](http://artisttrust.org/artists/etsuko-ichikawa/)*