

Spotlight on Asian American Art: Toshiko Takaezu Teaching Resources



Overview: Toshiko Takaezu (American, 1922–2011), was a multimedia artist who created ceramics, bronzes, textiles, and paintings that combine American and East Asian traditions. Learn about the artist’s unique perspective on the relationship between art, craft, and daily life and then consider how Takaezu’s work engages with her multicultural identity as an Asian American.

Curriculum: The Arts, Visual Arts, Social Studies, Cultural Studies

Grade Range: 6–12

Teaching Resources

[Art Finders: “Toshiko Takaezu: Shaping Abstraction”](#) | MFA Boston

Designed for use in the classroom, this slide deck features selected works from the 2023–24 MFA exhibition “Toshiko Takaezu: Shaping Abstraction.” Includes images, information on the artist and her work, and tips on utilizing art to support equity, inclusion, and racial literacy in the classroom.

[MFA Artworks by Toshiko Takaezu](#) | MFA Boston | Collections Search

Browse all 24 of Takaezu’s artworks in the MFA’s collections.

Image Credits – All works (pictured above) made by Toshiko Takaezu:

Medium Green Moon, 1990s, Stoneware, Gift of the artist

Ao-Ao, 1970, Wool, nylon, silk, and rayon plain weave with knotted pile, Partial gift of The Takaezu Studio and Museum purchase with the John H. and Ernestine A. Payne Fund and funds donated by Suzanne Werber Dworsky

Closed Form, 1980s, Salt-fired stoneware, Gift of the artist

MFA Boston

[Hear from the Artist](#) | MFA Boston

In this short video, see Toshiko Takaezu finishing one of her gravity-defying closed forms, and hear her commentary regarding her relationship with the clay.

Daniel Wilson, Excerpts from *With These Hands: The Rebirth of the American Craftsman*, 1970. Daniel Wilson Productions, in association with ABC News.

Sponsored by Johnson Wax. (3 minute video)

[Inside Toshiko Takaezu's "Closed Forms"](#) | Allentown Art Museum

Listen to the sounds of Takaezu's closed form vessels. In some of her artworks, Takaezu would draw attention to the interior space by placing a small clay ball inside that would rattle when the finished piece was handled. (1 minute video)

[Toshiko Takaezu Foundation](#)

This foundation seeks to promote the legacy of Toshiko Takaezu and to educate the public about her work and teachings. Website includes a variety of resources, including a biography, artwork images, and short essays about her different art forms.

Key Concepts

Abstract Art: Art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect. The term can be applied to art that is based on an object, figure or landscape, where forms have been simplified or schematised. It is also applied to art that uses forms, such as geometric shapes or gestural marks, which have no source at all in an external visual reality. (Source: [Art Terms | Tate](#))

Additional Resources for Teachers

[Toshiko Takaezu: Shaping Abstraction](#) | MFA Boston Lecture

Hear from Nonie Gadsden, Katharine Lane Weems Senior Curator of American Decorative Arts, about Toshiko Takaezu's gestural style, distinctive palettes, and complex layering of glazes, and get a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the MFA exhibition "Toshiko Takaezu: Shaping Abstraction." (47 minutes)

[Toshiko Takaezu: Worlds Within](#)

This publication offers an expansive look at the multifaceted American artist Toshiko Takaezu within the history of postwar artmaking.

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