

# Indigenous Designs

SCHOOL WORKSHOPS | Classroom Connections  
Grade Level: 2nd–6th

The  
Nelson-Atkins  
Museum  
of Art



## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Explore the galleries in search of distinctive designs from various cultures, including Native American functional art. Inspired by the collection, design a *parfleche* utilizing colors, shapes, and patterns.

## WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Describe and identify patterns in artwork from various cultures in the Museum's collection.
- Create a mixed media *parfleche* which includes the use of shapes, colors and patterns within the surface design.
- Identify a *parfleche* as being a functional piece of American Indian Art with aesthetic value.
- Identify and discuss symbolism in artwork as reflected in the Museum's collection.

## COLLECTION FOCUS

- Native American galleries

Additional stops may include China, Japan and Africa

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Share photos with #nelsonatkins

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### National Visual Arts Standards

- Create Artwork Using a Variety of Processes and Materials (VA:Cr2.1.3a)
- Brainstorm Multiple Approaches to an Art or Design Problem (VA:Cr1.14a)
- Identify and Explain Where Different Cultures Illustrate History Through Art (VA:Pr6.1.3a)
- Identify and Analyze Cultural Associations Suggested by Visual Imagery (VA:Re7.2.5a)
- Infer Information Through Observation (Time, Place, Culture) (VA:Cn11.1.4a)

### MO & KS Learning Standards: Math

- Recognize and Construct Lines of Symmetry for a 2-D Figure (4.Gm.A.3)

### National Social Studies Standards

- Describe Ways in Which Artistic Creations Serve as Expressions and Influence Behavior of a Particular Culture (1.c)



*Certain collections or galleries may be unavailable due to rotations or construction. We apologize for the inconvenience.*

4525 Oak Street | Kansas City, Missouri 64111  
[nelson-atkins.org](http://nelson-atkins.org)

**School Workshop Scheduler**  
**[StudioWorkshops@nelson-atkins.org](mailto:StudioWorkshops@nelson-atkins.org)**

## BEFORE YOUR VISIT

- Read a book to your class that includes designs from various cultures. Some suggestions are: *Gift Horse*, S.D. Nelson, *Anansi the Spider*, Gerald McDermott. *The Singing Snake*, Czernecki and Rhodes.

## AFTER YOUR VISIT

- Collect a variety of objects found in nature such as; leaves, flowers, butterfly wings, wood, feathers, seed pods, etc. Provide a magnifying glass to look closely for patterns. Ask if the students see symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial balance. Compare these patterns and designs with those seen in the Nelson-Atkins galleries.

## VOCABULARY/CONCEPTS

**Design:** An arrangement of lines or shapes to create a pattern or decoration.

**Pattern:** Decorative visual repetition (organized and random)

**Balance:** *Asymmetrical* - Organization of a design so that unlike objects have equal visual weight  
*Symmetrical* - Organization of a design so that elements are the same on either side of a central axis  
*Radial* - Organization of a design so that elements branch out from a central point

**Shape:** An element of art that is two-dimensional and encloses space

*Organic* - An irregular shape or one that derives characteristics from nature

*Geometric* - Any shape having more mathematical than organic design such as; circle, square, triangle or rectangle

**Indigenous:** Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; Native.

**Functional Art:** Works of art intended to be used in a practical way in addition to being aesthetically pleasing

**Border:** A decorative band that runs along the outside edge of a composition

**Parfleche:** A Native American rawhide bag



Boy's Shirt ca. 1880



Parfleche Envelope, ca. 1900



Jamie Okuma, b. 1977  
*Adaptation*, 2011



## EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

The ERC can help you expand your before and after visit activities to fully connect your museum experience with your classroom curriculum. The ERC provides:

- Curriculum Consultations
- Circulating Resources, including Art Connection Kits
- Professional Development Workshops

[nelson-atkins.org/educators/](http://nelson-atkins.org/educators/)

