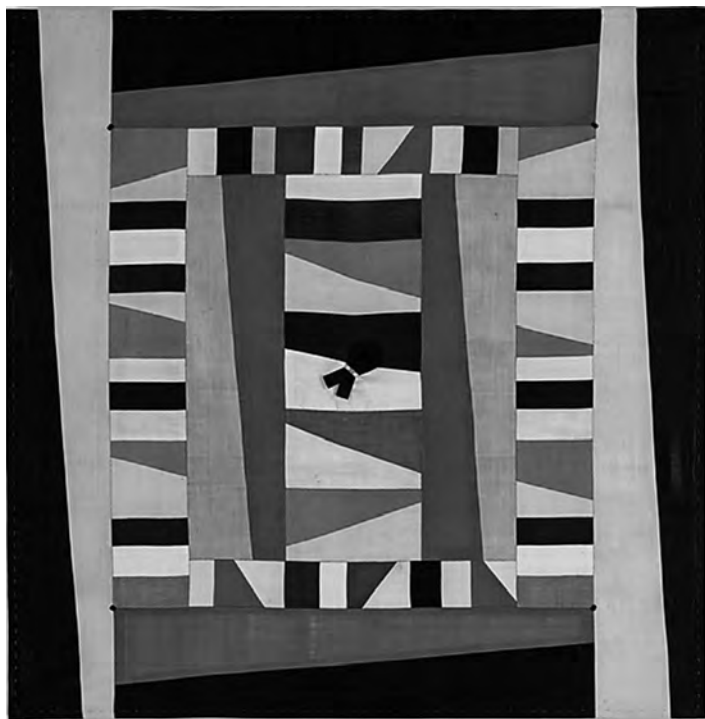


Using Korean Bojagi in the Classroom

By Carrie Jeruzal



Patchwork wrapping cloth (Jogakbo). Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art at <http://tiny.cc/ow0e1w>.

Bojagi: An Introduction

Bojagi (sometimes written *pojagi*) is a traditional Korean folk art consisting of patchwork cloths made from scrap fabrics such as cotton, silk, ramie, and hemp. These practical cloths of varying sizes were present in Korea as early as the fourteenth century and were used to cover and contain items such as gifts, beds, tables, and foods. The art has historically been passed down through generations of unnamed female artists and were used by Korean people from all classes, commoners and royalty alike. Traditionally, girls learned needlework at a young age, and bojagi became a rare outlet for creative expression.

The handmade textile covers embodied personal sentiments “stitched” into each design. The artist carefully selected colors, patterns, and even stylized embroidered imagery from nature, such as peonies and bats, to become symbols and metaphors for good fortune, longevity, happiness, and more. Commonly, bojagi is made from a minimalist design of squares and rectangles recalling images similar to modern-era European paintings by the likes of Paul Klee and Piet Mondrian. Bojagi were triple-stitched with raised seams, allowing their images to be reversible, durable, and reusable. The textiles could be wrapped over objects into a number of similar forms, much like those of origami.

Historically, bojagi were not only decorative but were also used in religious and symbolic ways. Often, bojagi became family heirlooms. Today, contemporary bojagi fiber artists such as Chungie Lee have reinvented the medium not only as a means of honoring the history of Korean women, but as a relevant, versatile art that is often intertwined with fashion and photography.

Classroom Applications

Enduring Idea: Bojagi are significant Korean historical and contemporary works of art, both from visual and cultural perspectives.

Rationale: Studying the cultural importance and meaning behind a utilitarian piece of Korean folk art deepens students’ understanding and appreciation of Korean people and broadens personal creativity through the medium of fiber art.

Key Concepts about the Enduring Idea

- Bojagi were/are practical, beautiful, and meaningful objects.
- Bojagi were traditionally made by “unnamed,” isolated Korean women and girls.
- Bojagi wrap gifts, food, tables, and other objects.
- Bojagi are self-expressed individual designs and often become family heirlooms.
- Bojagi are comprised of reusable, reversible patchwork squares and rectangles stitched from fabric, similar to mini-quilts.
- The way a bojagi is wrapped around an object can be an art in and of itself.
- Colors, stitches, patterns, and embroidery can be symbolic.
- Bojagi can be compared and contrasted with American crazy quilts, contemporary story quilt installations, and the work of painters Piet Mondrian and Paul Klee.

Essential Questions

- What are bojagi?
- What are some of the Korean cultural meanings and traditions surrounding the art form?
- How can fabric be used in self-expression?
- How can art serve others?

Unit Objectives

- Students will have a better understanding of Korean art and culture and therefore a broader worldview.
- Students will learn how to create a mini self-portrait in a style of their choosing using a mirror or a photo reference.
- Older students will learn how to appropriately select fabrics, hand stitch, and use a sewing machine.
- Students will honor/love their parent/guardian and the community in the Confucian tradition.

Assessment

- Students will critique traditional, contemporary, and personal works of fiber art.
- Students will share statements to explain their works to teachers, parents, and press.
- Students will exhibit their work at school, in the local newspaper, and at home.
- Students will ask and answer deep questions relating to cultural significance and personal intention.

Formative assessment will be done through verbal questioning, observing, monitoring progress, and stitching/sketchbook checks. Summative assessment will be done in the form of a final presentation, digital photo record, and display, where points will be earned when specific criteria are met.

Unit Plan Resources

Materials Purchased

Wooden masonite board cut into four-by-six-inch tiles (one or two needed per student)

Fat quarters of cotton fabric in a variety of colors and patterns

Rotary cutting mat and rotary fabric cutter

Thread, needles, straight pins

Seven bottles of strong fabric glue

Giant Ziplock storage bags

Good Fortune in a Wrapping Cloth
by Joan Schoettler

Bojagi and Beyond by Chungie Lee

Wrapagami: The Art of Fabric Gift

Wraps by Jennifer Playford

Two hundred digital prints of students' work for display



Students working on sewing bojagi. Images courtesy of author.

Materials Already Available

Crayola fabric markers

Acrylic paint

Twine, yarn

Gesso primer

Scissors

Oil pastels

Mirrors

Brushes

Paint palettes

Water, water cups, aprons

Fabric

Fabric scissors

Metal T-square and rulers

Digital camera

Plastic bags for covering tables

Newspapers for covering tables

Two large plastic bins for storage

Computer with Skype download

Computer-mounted camera with microphone

SMART board, projector, speakers, and one iron



Valory, eleventh grade. Image courtesy of author.

Materials/Labor Donated

A hardware store cut the wooden tiles and a custodian drilled holes at the top of the boards so each could be hung

Additional fabric

Two irons and an ironing board

Sewing materials (thread, bias tape, ribbons, buttons, etc.)

Two used sewing machines (labor for repair of one machine)

Local artist Eliza Fernand's contemporary story quilt presentation and community "white quilt" stitching instruction

Twenty-minute Skype interview with author Joan Schoettler



Nicholas, sixth grade. Image courtesy of author.



Lexi, twelfth grade. Image courtesy of author.

RESOURCES

TEACHING RESOURCES ESSAYS

Overview of Lesson

Junior High (Sixth to Eighth Grade)

Week One: (Five, forty-eight-minute class periods): I gave students in-depth instructions for drawing the proportions of the human face and direct observation self-portrait drawing from a mirror. Students practiced on paper and then transferred or redrew their portrait onto a wooden masonite tile. Students painted the self-portrait using acrylic paint, gathering inspiration from a variety of painting styles found on Google images for “famous self-portraits.” They then recorded their names on the back of the masonite using a permanent marker and secured a loop of twine or yarn at the top.

Week Two: I invited guest fiber artist Eliza Fernand to give a class presentation about her contemporary story quilt installations. She taught students how to hand stitch on a community round “white quilt” project (see link under “Websites”). I then introduced traditional and contemporary Korean wrap-

ping cloths and the work of artist Chunghie Lee. Students then worked with a handout on the major ideas of bojagi. Students began creating their own sixteen-by-eighteen-inch patchwork bojagi by selecting and cutting shapes from a variety of fabrics and notions. Classes can be given the option to stitch together one rectangle of muslin and one rectangle of designed patchwork pillowcase-style or to stitch a patchwork design directly onto the backside of the muslin. Traditionally, bojagi are reversible and triple-stitched with raised seams. I gave my students the option of whipstitching by hand, using the sewing machine, or using a combination. Students took turns learning how to use the sewing machines.

Week Three: Students completed stitching their bojagi and read the story *Good Fortune in a Wrapping Cloth* by Joan Schoettler. I had students prepare questions and then Skyped the author, who gave a presentation about her book and her writing process. Students were then able to interview her. Students compared and contrasted the work of Chunghie Lee, Eliza Fernand and classic American crazy quilts. On the last day of the unit, class members wrote in their bojagi wishes/intentions for their parents on a provided handout (love, luck, good fortune, happiness, health, joy, etc.). After the handout was personalized, I showed my class how to wrap their self-portrait tile in the handout and then in the wrapping cloth. Since names are on the inside, I also put a small removable sticker/tape label with their initials on the outside. Students took them home and gave their bojagi-wrapped self-portraits to their parents/guardians.

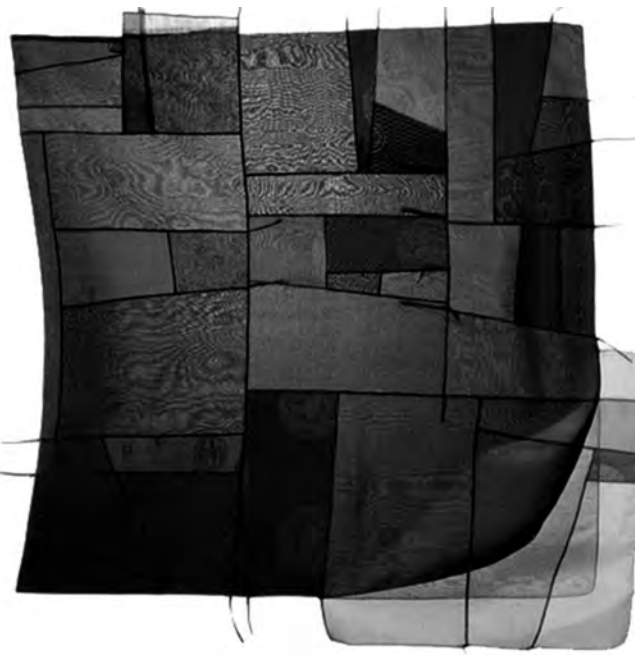
Lesson Extension

High School Students (Ninth to Twelfth Grade)

If time allows, instead of one bojagi, challenge older students to complete two. The second bojagi and painted wooden tiles can be made as a community service art. They can be given away to educate, honor, and cheer the elderly residents in a local nursing home.

Unit Plan Resources

(See prior page)



Contemporary antique Jogakbo (Patchwork). Silk Bojagi example from *Bojagi and Beyond* by Chunghie Lee on the Surface Design Association blog at <http://tiny.cc/fo0e1w>.

Accommodations

The gift can really be anything meaningful to your students and relatable to your unit of study. Instead of mini-self-portraits, you may choose to make books of *sijo* poetry, chopsticks, a ceramic tea bowl, or a Korean food item. Whatever you choose, test the dimensions of your wrapping cloth before you begin and decide upon the final dimensions. If the dimensions are right, the cloth should be able to be wrapped and tied a number of different ways. Wrapping cloths that are cut too short can be secured with pins, ribbons, or yarn.

Extensions

Make a big wrapping cloth for use in the classroom. Use it to wrap gifts for the students that can correspond to different events throughout the year (big bag of candy, set of pencils, free homework passes, etc.). The classroom bojagi can become a symbol of good fortune within to celebrate success and create learning excitement.

Sell student-made bojagi for a class fundraiser.

Final Suggestions

YouTube videos can be found to give wrapping instructions. I also recommend the book *Wrapagami*. If you have time, seal the mini self-portraits with an acrylic clear coat, lacquer, or varnish.

Additional Korean folk tales and stories can be found in other books, as well as downloaded in podcasts (see resources below).

Recommended Readings

BOOKS

Connor, Mary E. *The Koreas (Asia in Focus)*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009.
Lee, Chunghie. *Bojagi & Beyond*. Providence: Beyond & Above, 2010.
Playford, Jennifer. *Wrapagami: The Art of Fabric Gift Wraps*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2009.
Schoettler, Joan, and Jessica Lanan. *Good Fortune in a Wrapping Cloth*. Walnut Creek: Shen's Books, 2011.

WEBSITES

Asian Art: <http://www.asianart.org>
Asian Art—Korea Galley Guide: <http://tiny.cc/vh3zyw>
Bojagi artist, Youngmin Lee: www.youngminlee.com/bojagi
Bojagi artist, Chunghie Lee: http://www.chunghielee.com/chunghie_lee.htm
Quilt artist, Eliza Fernand: <http://elizafernand.com/home.html> ■

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