

Storm King Art Center Teacher Resource



Material Matters

Observe and experience a variety of sculptural materials at Storm King Art Center. Make connections between materials and ideas and consider the processes and choices of artists as they work with diverse materials. Recommended for grades K-12.

Dear Teachers,

We are delighted to welcome you to Storm King Art Center, a 500-acre outdoor museum located in New York's Hudson Valley, where visitors experience large-scale sculpture and site-specific commissions under open sky.

This resource is designed to help you prepare to explore the theme of "Material Matters" with your students at Storm King. By approaching visits through a thematic lens, we hope to engage learners in focused close looking, activities, and conversation—providing a solid foundation as students construct connections throughout their experience.

Whether you have chosen a guided tour or will be facilitating your own visit, this resource offers pre-visit ideas to prepare for your trip, tips and tools for onsite engagement, and post-visit activity prompts for continued exploration.

During a guided visit, your educator might build the experience around a particular sub-theme related to Materials (ex: material and process, everyday objects, juxtaposing materials). Please be in touch at least two weeks before your program if you have specific interests.

While you may not see all artworks in this packet during a guided program, we invite you to visit additional artworks after your tour if time allows. The artworks in this packet are situated within one mile of the School Group arrival area.

If you have additional questions about your upcoming visit, please contact us at:
groups@stormkingartcenter.org

We look forward to welcoming you and your students soon!

Sincerely,
The Storm King Learning and Engagement Team

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Cover Image: Isamu Noguchi (American, born Japan, 1904–1988), *Momo Taro*, 1977–78. Granite, 9 ft. x 34 ft. 7 in. x 21 ft. 7 in. (274.3 cm x 10.5 m x 657.9 cm). Gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation. © 2017 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Pre-Visit

INTRODUCTION TO STORM KING ART CENTER

Storm King Art Center is a 500-acre outdoor museum, where visitors experience large-scale sculpture under open sky. We strongly recommend you download our free digital guide on the Bloomberg Connects app (available on the Apple Store, Google Play, or at <https://www.bloombergconnects.org/>). Here you'll find photos, videos, audio recordings, maps, suggested routes, activities for children and families, and more. Use the app to plan your visit, then easily access helpful insights onsite. Afterward, use it in the classroom to dive deeper into your favorite works. You and your students can learn more about Storm King's [environmental stewardship](#), collection, and community connections in this brief [Oral History video](#), featuring Storm King President John P. Stern.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME "MATERIAL MATTERS"

A material is the substance from which something is made. For example, the sole of a shoe might be made of rubber, or a bottle might be made of glass or plastic. As you explore Storm King, you'll find sculptures created by artists who transform and combine a variety of materials.

For Younger Students: Invite students to work in small groups to identify various materials found around their classroom. How many materials can each group find? Ask students to list adjectives that describe each material and share some ideas that each material makes them think of.

For Older Students: In individual journals or small groups, have students brainstorm what materials come to mind when they think of sculpture. Ask them to share materials that they think would be particularly interesting or surprising to discover in sculptures. As students share back, invite the class to consider different associations they have with each material they mention (textures, scents, experiences, etc.).

OBSERVE AND DISCUSS

Project or print an image of Chakaia Booker's sculpture [A Moment in Time](#) (page 4) for students to observe. Ask students what they notice. How would they describe the shapes and textures they see? What does the sculpture make them think of?

Share that Chakaia Booker created this sculpture out of rubber tires. What do you think she might have done to the tires to create these shapes and textures? What are some ideas that tires make students think of? Why do you think Booker might have chosen tires as a sculptural material?

For older students, add some more context about the artist (page 5). Ask students to talk with a partner and then share back: How do they think the artwork might relate to its title, *A Moment in Time*?

Artwork Images and Information



Chakaia Booker (American, b. 1953), *A Moment in Time*, 2004. Rubber tires, stainless steel, and steel, 10 ft. x 9 ft. 1 in. x 10 ft. 2 in. (304.8 x 276.9 x 309.9 cm). Gift of the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation

[A Moment in Time \(2004\) by Chakaia Booker](#)

Chakaia Booker works almost exclusively with recycled tires—slicing, twisting, stripping, weaving, and riveting rubber and radials to create and exaggerate the textures, prickled edges, and torqued forms of her radical refashioning. Whether she is creating small-scale wall reliefs resembling ballistic blowouts, suggestively hairy and ovoid pedestal sculptures, or colossal landscape-like tableaux, Booker transforms tires—iconic symbols of urban waste and blight—into extraordinary compositions of renewal.

A Moment in Time conveys multiple meanings that crisscross historical, social, political, and cultural contexts. The different tonalities of the rubber, for instance, from brown- and blue-, to green- and red-black, are linked to issues of African-American identity as well as to the history of black as a color in modern art. As commercial objects, tires symbolize the rise and fall of industrial revolutions, the movement of populations across the landscape, the growth of the suburbs, and the decay of urban centers. Discarded and now re-used, the tires are also metaphors for the modern cycle of industrial manufacture and waste in an era of global expansion. *A Moment in Time* alludes not only to environmental degradation and decay but also to the possibility of transformation and redemption through the artist's own brand of environmental spiritualism.

Media: Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects; [Images from Chakaia Booker's 2004 exhibition at Storm King](#).



Isamu Noguchi (American, born Japan, 1904–1988), *Momo Taro*, 1977–78. Granite, 9 ft. x 34 ft. 7 in. x 21 ft. 7 in. (274.3 cm x 10.5 m x 657.9 cm). Gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation. © 2017 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

[Momo Taro \(1977-78\) by Isamu Noguchi](#)

After Storm King’s co-founder H. Peter Stern invited Isamu Noguchi to build a sculpture for the collection, Noguchi visited in 1977, surveyed the landscape, selected a site, then returned to his studio on the Japanese island of Shikoku to work on *Momo Taro*. Keeping Storm King’s topography in mind, he consulted many site photographs and measurements gathered during his visit. Noguchi, admired for his unparalleled ability to blend aesthetic achievement with function, made a model for a stone work that included two split boulders. After he began working with the stones, however, the design changed significantly. One of his assistants searched for boulders on the nearby island of Shodoshima, in the Seto Inland Sea, and found one too large to move; it had to be split. The rock’s appearance after being split reminded his assistants of Momo Taro, an ancient folk hero who emerged from a peach pit to become the son of an elderly couple. The work was finished within a year and was installed in the spring of 1978.

The nine-part, forty-ton granite sculpture, hugging the earth and anchored to a concrete base underground, sits atop a specially landscaped hill, with commanding views of the surrounding area. The dramatic setting on a high mound was created at the artist’s request by former Storm King landscape architect William A. Rutherford, Sr. The hill is integral to the work. Noguchi noted, “The sculpture lives as part of a hill. It was the hill that got me going, which inspired me.” While Noguchi is known for creating fully orchestrated environments, on this occasion he set his carved stones into surroundings whose ultimate evolution would be out of his control.

The full realization of *Momo Taro* depends on the interaction of visitors, who are invited to not just touch, but to enter, to sit, and to unite their bodies with the work—to participate in its existence. Noguchi's flat bench provides a welcome site for rest and contemplation. The "center" of the piece—the hollowed-out granite "peach pit"—serves as a peaceful retreat. Even on the hottest summer days this interior remains cool. Noguchi expressed his wish that visitors, especially children, would not only climb into the cavity but also sing inside it and enjoy its special aural resonance. The reflective "mirror," a highly polished surface, is angled to fully reflect the sun in summer. The theatrical aspect of the work as a place for action or social gathering reflects Noguchi's extensive history of designing stage sets, primarily for Martha Graham between 1935 and 1966, as well as public plazas and playgrounds.

Media: Audio recordings and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects; [Images of *Momo Taro*'s 1978 installation.](#)



Alyson Shotz (American, b. 1964), *Mirror Fence*, 2003 (refabricated 2014). Starphire mirror and aluminum, 36 in. x 4 in. x 138 ft. (91.4 cm x 10.2 cm x 42.1 m). Gift of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, with generous lead support from Roberta and Steven Denning. Additional support provided by The Donald R. Mullen Family Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Schwartz. © Alyson Shotz

[Mirror Fence \(2003\) by Alyson Shotz](#)

The individual pickets of Alyson Shotz's *Mirror Fence* share their shape and height with picket fences enclosing front and back yards all across the United States, but Shotz's fence is reflective and extends in a straight line, enclosing nothing. Shotz has commented on the irony of the acceptance of the picket fence—it is an innocuous, everyday element in American life, but it serves a protective purpose: each picket is topped with a spike.

Shotz, who studied Geology before becoming an artist, engages the fleeting realities and subtleties of vision and perception in her work. "I'm interested in making objects that change infinitely, depending on their surroundings," she has noted. "The light at different times of day, the weather, the seasons... all these are just some of the variables that will make the piece different every time one comes in contact with it. For me an ideal work of art is one that is ultimately unknowable in some way."

Media: Audio recordings and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects; Alyson Shotz [Oral History video](#).



Ursula von Rydingsvard (American, b. Germany 1942), *Luba*, 2009-2010. Cedar, cast bronze, and graphite, 17 ft. 8 in. x 11 ft. 7 in. x 7 ft. 4 in. (538.5 cm x 353.1 cm x 223.5 cm). Made possible through generous lead support from the artist, Roberta and Steven Denning, Galerie Lelong, Nancy Brown Negley and The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, and Thomas A. and Georgina T. Russo. Additional support is provided by an anonymous donor, the Hazen Polsky Foundation, the Ohnell Family Foundation, and Hume R. Steyer. Special thanks also go to Henry S. McNeil and Marion Swingle. © Ursula von Rydingsvard

[Luba \(2009-2010\) by Ursula von Rydingsvard](#)

Ursula von Rydingsvard's primary material—used in constructing both *Luba* and *For Paul*—is four-by-four lengths of cedar wood, a material that, as the artist has said, “it seems to be I’m able to speak through.” Von Rydingsvard stacks, glues, and cuts into these beams freehand with a circular saw—an intuitive process that the artist has likened to the freedom and creativity that many artists associate with the process of drawing. *Luba* is the first work on a large scale that von Rydingsvard created in solid cedar. *For Paul*, made nearly twenty years prior, is composed of an internal honeycomb pattern and sited so that its repeated openings can be seen from a landing above. *For Paul* is dedicated to von Rydingsvard's husband.

Von Rydingsvard's sculptures are large, but retain a sense of human scale. On one side of the main form of *Luba*, a delicate appendage extends down to the ground; von Rydingsvard has said that it is intended to resemble the arm of a mother cradling a baby. The lower portion of this arm, supporting its spindly reach, is made of bronze and marks the first time von Rydingsvard has combined bronze and cedar into a single work. Highlighting the handiwork and a physical, tangible connection to her sculpture, von Rydingsvard then rubbed graphite into areas of the surface of *Luba*, emphasizing the shadow and depth of the circular saw's cuts.

Von Rydingsvard has described her background as influential within her practice. Born to Polish and Ukrainian peasant farmers, her early childhood was marked by the strain of living in eight different refugee camps over the course of five years in postwar Germany. She immigrated with her family to the United States when she was still a small child. In form, process, and meaning, she sees her work as responsive to eastern European peasant traditions.

Media: Audio recordings and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects, Ursula von Rydingsvard [Oral History video](#).



Rashid Johnson (American, b. 1977), *Stacked Heads*, 2020. Cast bronze with black patina, plants, 10 ft. x 48 in. x 48 in. (304.8 cm x 121.9 cm x 121.9 cm). Purchase, Anonymous, Cecilia Tay and Sam Kellie-Smith, and Ralph Segreti. © Rashid Johnson.

[Stacked Heads \(2020\) by Rashid Johnson](#)

The imposing busts of Rashid Johnson's *Stacked Heads*, balanced one atop the other, are constructed out of bronze coated in a glossy black patina. The sculpture's surface is textured with incised marks, reminiscent of Johnson's distinctive, sometimes violent manipulation of softer and more malleable materials such as shea butter, black soap, and wax.

During the growing season, grasses and ferns native to Storm King's ecosystem spring from cracks and crevasses like abstracted facial features and leafy, green hair. Johnson frequently uses plants in his work as a way of instilling viewers with feelings of empathy, saying "I always thought it was interesting to make something that people had to take care of."

Media: Audio recordings and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects.

During Your Visit to Storm King

GENERAL INFORMATION

PLEASE FULLY READ YOUR GROUP CONFIRMATION LETTER for complete details about arrival, lunch, chaperones, trams, tours, and weather. Additional information about Group Visits can be found at <https://stormking.org/groups/> or by contacting groups@stormkingartcenter.org

PREPARE TO BE OUTDOORS: Storm King is a 500-acre outdoor sculpture museum. Keep in mind that your group will be outside for your entire visit to Storm King, rain or shine. We recommend dressing in layers and wearing comfortable shoes for lots of walking. It's a good idea to bring a refillable water bottle, sunscreen, bug spray, and weather-appropriate attire.

HELP US PROTECT THE SCULPTURES: Touching, walking on, or climbing on most of the works of art at Storm King is prohibited. The sunscreen, hand lotion, bug spray, and even natural oils on your hands damage the surface of the sculptures. You might not think one touch matters but remember, about 200,000 people visit Storm King every year. Thousands of touches add up to lots of damage. Always refrain from climbing artworks for your own safety and the safety of others.



INTERACTIVE ARTWORKS: Artworks which visitors may touch are designated on the map and on the grounds with a hand icon, pictured at left.

RESPECT WILDLIFE: All kinds of animals and plants make their home at Storm King – be good guests by giving them plenty of space. Do not enter our long and native grass fields and please refrain from climbing trees.

TERRAIN: The Art Center's grounds comprise varied terrain including rolling meadows, hills, wooded areas, paved paths, and gravel paths. During guided tours, please be prepared to cover up to one mile on grass.

ACCESSIBILITY: Storm King Art Center is committed to offering a rich experience of art and landscape to every visitor. **Please let us know in advance if anyone in your group has accessibility needs.** Level, paved pathways traverse many parts of the Art Center; however, some areas may only be accessed via steep terrain, unpaved pathways, or mown grass. The visitor map indicates paved and unpaved paths and steep areas (where slope exceeds that of a wheelchair-accessible ramp, or 12.5%). [Learn more.](#)

TIME: We recommend planning at least 3 hours for your visit. Guided tours are usually 45-60 minutes. If your visit is self-guided, or you have time before or after your tour, you may have lunch at a designated picnic area and explore the grounds on your own.

MATERIALS: You may choose to bring pencils and sketchbooks or notebooks for students to draw and write during the self-guided portion of your visit. Check out our [teacher resources](#), the digital guide on Bloomberg Connects, and the tips and techniques for onsite engagement document for more inspiration.

MAP: Access an up-to-date map of Storm King under the heading “Visitor Map” on our [“Visit” webpage](#), or pick up a map when you arrive at the Art Center. The digital guide on Bloomberg Connects features a live map.

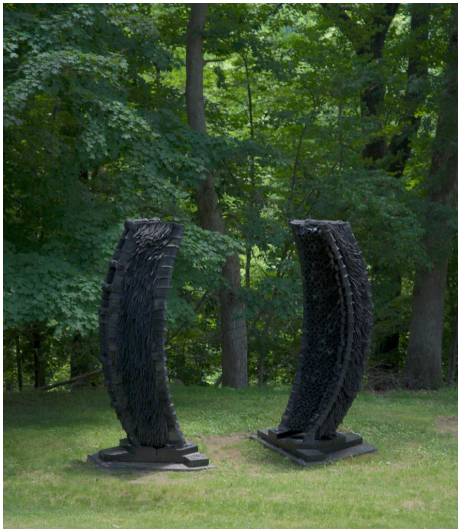
MISCELLANEOUS:

- Ball playing and other recreational items and sports are not permitted.
- Indoor galleries are located in the Museum Building on Museum Hill. We ask that you limit the number of students inside the galleries at one time to 10.
- Roadways are used by pedestrians and Storm King staff, trams, personal vehicles, and rented bicycles. Please use caution.
- Carry in, carry out. Be sure that all trash and recycling makes it into bins. If you have lunch at Storm King, tidy up after yourself to make sure the next hungry visitors can enjoy the area too.
- Storm King reserves the right to refuse entry or to eject any group for misconduct at any time. Groups that are asked to leave the site or that cause damage to the site may be prohibited from visiting in the future.

MATERIAL MATTERS

Continue exploring the theme of materials with your students at Storm King. If you are on a self-guided visit, or have time before or after your tour, walk the grounds. Try to identify and describe materials in each sculpture. What ideas does each sculpture inspire? Compare/contrast sculptures made of the same materials and sculptures made of different materials.

Visit some or all of the artworks featured in this resource packet:



Artwork: *A Moment in Time* (2004) by Chakaia Booker

Location: North Woods; see map on page 15

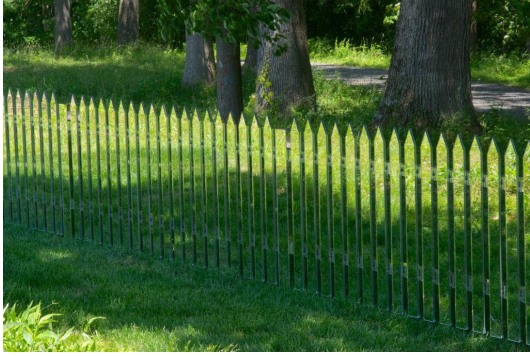
Engagement: Walk around and through the sculpture. Ask students what they notice about the artwork in person that they did not notice when viewing a photo of it in class. Ask younger students to recreate some of the larger and smaller shapes with their bodies. Invite older students to create a close-up sketch or photo of one area of the sculpture. Consider techniques the artist might have used to transform rubber tires into these shapes and textures. Revisit conversations about students' associations and ideas related to tires.



Artwork: *Stacked Heads* (2020) by Rashid Johnson

Location: North Woods; see map on page 15

Engagement: Invite students to explore the work from multiple angles and distances. What do they notice from close up that they might not notice from far away? Consider techniques the artist might have used to create the textures on the surface of the sculpture. Compare the plants used in the sculpture to the plants in the surrounding landscape.



Artwork: *Mirror Fence* (2003) by Alyson Shotz

Location: Museum Hill; see map on page 15

Engagement: Invite students to explore the work from multiple angles and distances. What do they notice? What surprises them? What ideas does this artwork make them think about? Why do you think the artist might have chosen mirrors as material?



Artwork: *Momo Taro* (1977-78) by Isamu Noguchi

Location: Museum Hill; see map on page 15

Engagement: Students are invited to touch, sit on, and sing into this granite sculpture. Ask them to list as many words as they can to describe the material. How is this sculpture different from others they've explored today? How is it similar?



Artwork: *Luba* (2009-10) by Ursula von Rydingsvard

Location: Museum Hill; see map on page 15

Engagement: Ask students what senses are sparked by this sculpture. The material graphite used in this sculpture can be sensed through smell. Ask students to consider how this sculpture might have been constructed. Does the material, texture, or pattern remind them of anything?

"MATERIAL MATTERS" ARTWORK LOCATIONS

#103: Chakaia Booker,
A Moment in Time

#219: Alyson Shotz,
Mirror Fence

#218: Ursula von
Rydingsvard, *Luba*



#112: Rashid Johnson,
Stacked Heads

#212: Isamu Noguchi,
Momo Taro

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT STORM KING

EXPLORE PERSPECTIVE. View sculptures and vistas from afar, close up, above, and below. Move around and through artworks to experience them from different angles. Invite students to create a rectangle with their hands to use as a viewfinder, “zooming in” on details and “cropping” views. Try photographing the same artwork or area from multiple perspectives. Ask students to imagine or draw what something might look like from a bird’s-eye view or a worm’s-eye view.

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS. Engage students in conversation by asking open-ended questions such as: What do you notice? What does this make you think of? What do you wonder? What artworks or areas do you like the most? Why?

ENGAGE YOUR SENSES. Take the time to slow down and breathe deeply. What scents do you notice? What sounds do you hear? Invite students to create a six-word poem or story inspired by their sensory experiences. In addition to feeling the tickle of breezes and grass blades, we invite visitors to interact with sculptures marked on the map with a hand icon.

EMBRACE THE LANDSCAPE. Enjoy cloud gazing, downhill rolling, and creature and critter watching. Please engage with the land safely and respectfully.

SKETCH. Ask students to try capturing sculptures and vistas with single-line contour drawings, challenging them to create quick sketches without lifting their pencil from the page. Try drawing the same artwork or area from multiple angles. Zoom in on details. Experiment with mark making to capture different textures and create compositions featuring both sculpture and landscape.

GET MOVING! Encourage students to explore ideas with their bodies. They might physically recreate shapes they observe or respond to art and nature through dance and movement.

CONSIDER TITLES. While the digital guide and Storm King [website](#) can provide additional information about each artwork, many works have nearby placards listing the artist and title. You might add an additional layer to group conversations by considering how a title might relate to an artwork.

TUNE INTO THE AUDIO GUIDE. Accessible on Storm King’s digital guide on the free Bloomberg Connects App. Make the most of your visit with audio and video commentary by artists and Storm King staff. Artwork lookup numbers can be found on the map and on the label next to each artwork.

Post-Visit

REFLECT

Ask students to individually journal or talk with a partner about their visit to Storm King. What are some materials they saw and ideas they discussed?

MATERIAL AND MEANING

Consider the different materials artists at Storm King used in their sculptures, and what ideas those sculptures made students think about. Learn more about Alyson Sholtz's piece, [Mirror Fence](#) (page 8), in her [Oral History Video](#). Ask students why they think the artist might have chosen to use mirrors as a material.

ART EXPLORATION

Prompt for Students: How will you create a sculpture using familiar materials?

Gather piles of three simple materials for an art making exploration. Materials might include: paper, aluminum foil, pipe cleaners/wire, string, etc. Also provide tape or glue. Scissors can be optional.

First, lead students in an inquiry with each material. What are different ways to transform paper (ex: roll, fold, tear, tab, etc)? What are different ways to transform foil? Etc.

Then, ask students to consider ideas and associations that each material makes them think of. Give older students a few minutes to think and/or sketch an idea for a sculpture. Will their sculpture be abstract, exploring the properties of the materials? Will it be representational, relating to some ideas the materials make them think of? Will they use just one material or combine multiple materials?

After students have created their sculptures, provide an opportunity for them to share. Students might take turns sharing the title of their work and one choice that they made. Alternatively, students could create a label for their work and then do a "gallery walk" around the room to explore each other's work.

Ask older students to imagine their sculptures large-scale, and to draw or discuss where they might position it in an outdoor setting like Storm King.

Resources

Storm King Art Center Collection

<https://collections.stormking.org/index.php/About/collection>

John P. Stern Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4867>

Alyson Shotz Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4833>

Ursula von Rydingsvard Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4861>

Images from Chakaia Booker's 2004 exhibition at Storm King

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/133>

Images of *Momo Taro*'s 1978 installation

https://collections.stormking.org/Browse/archival/facet/rel_entity_facet/id/180

Storm King Art Center Groups

<https://stormking.org/groups/>