

Storm King Art Center Teacher Resource



Taryn Simon ***Kleroterion*, 2024**

How can an artwork prompt us to reflect on how decisions are made, within both our family units and in political systems? Using Taryn Simon's interactive work, *Kleroterion* (2024), as a departure point, consider the structures of ancient Athenian democracy, such as sortition, and whether and how they might have a role in our contemporary lives. Recommended for grades 5-12.

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 Taryn Simon's installation, *Kleroterion*, with your students at Storm King. 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.

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: Taryn Simon (American, b. 1975), *Kleroterion*, 2024. Mixed media. Courtesy the artist, Gagosian, and Almine Rech. Photo by Eli Baden-Lasar.

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**, via the QR code 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 also learn more about Storm King's [environmental stewardship](#), collection, and community connections in this brief [video](#) featuring Storm King President John P. Stern.



INTRODUCTION TO KLEROTERION

[Show students a photograph of an ancient kleroterion and explain how it was used in Ancient Athens.](#) [This helpful video shows a careful reconstruction of how it might have worked.](#) Share relevant vocabulary (sortition, lottery, democracy).



Fragment of a kleroterion and jurors' ballots from the Ancient Agora of Athens Archaeological Museum.

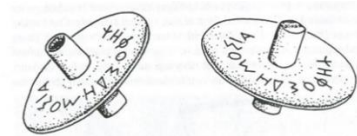


Fig 9 Jurors' ballots.

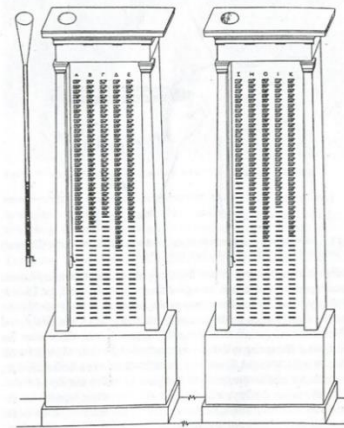


Fig 10 The kleroterion for allocating jurors to courts (reconstruction).

Sortition – The action of selecting or determining something by the casting or drawing of lots.

Lottery – A selection made by lot from a number of applicants or competitors.

Democracy – Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.

Project or print an image of Taryn Simon's *Kleroterion* (page 5) 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? How does it compare with the ancient kleroterion? What are some similarities? What are some differences?

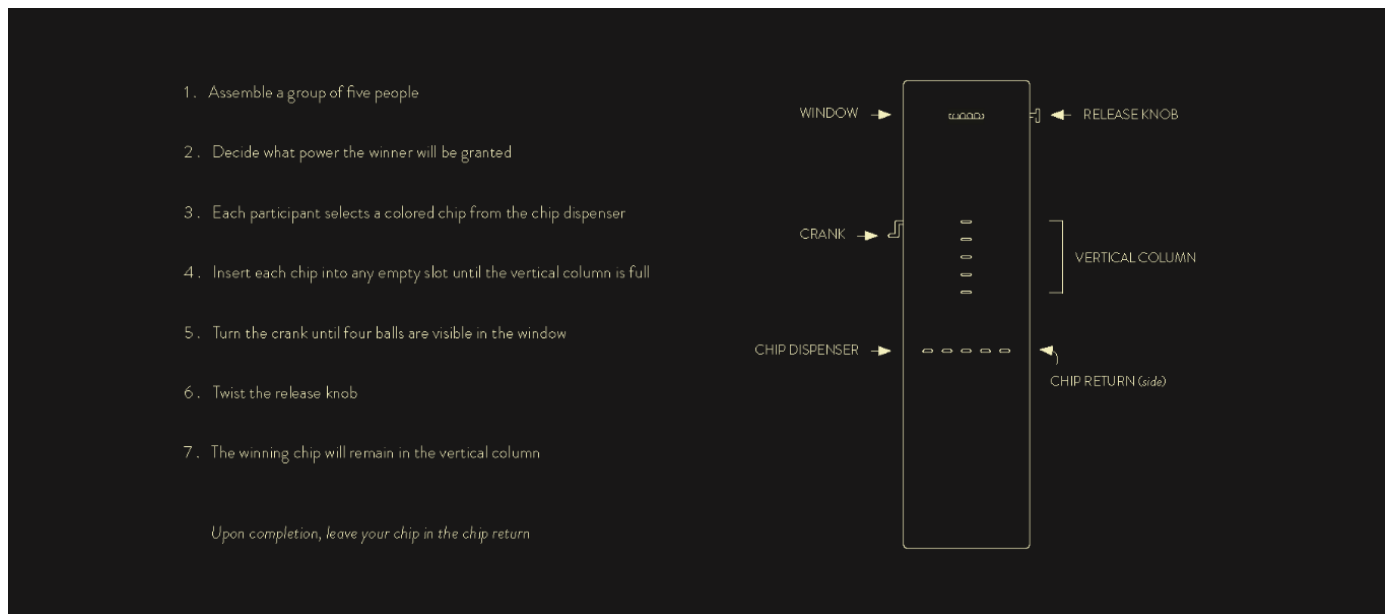
DISCUSS

Invite students to discuss how decisions get made in their families. Some examples include what to eat for dinner, where to go on vacation, or what to do over a weekend. Are there decisions that they, as children, are empowered to make in their families? What do they think is an ideal method for decision-making in a family? Discuss the concept of a lottery with students. Invite them to simulate a lottery in class: have each student write their name on a piece of paper and drop it into a box or a hat. Pick one out of the hat and give the winner the power to make a decision for the classroom.

Begin a conversation about democracy. What does the term mean to students? Highlight some key words or concepts that students offer. Ask students what they know about the voting process here in the United States. Have they ever seen a voting booth or gone inside one? What does it look like? Ask them to share what they know about how votes are cast in local, state, and/or federal elections.

Show this [TED-Ed video on Athenian Democracy](#). In small groups or partners, ask students to discuss what they learned. What do they think about sortition democracy? What are some of its benefits? What are its weaknesses? Does it seem like an effective or sustainable system?

Wrap up by returning to Taryn Simon's *Kleroterion* and asking students to brainstorm questions to "ask" at the work. See the instructions for interaction with Simon's piece below. Record the questions and decide which ones you will ask on your trip to Storm King. You can even use the lottery method to select the questions!



Artwork Image and Information



Taryn Simon, American, b. 1975. *Kleroterion*, 2024. Courtesy the artist, Gagosian Gallery, and Almine Rech.

Artist Taryn Simon (American, b. 1975) has imagined an election machine based on surviving archaeological fragments of the kleroterion, an ancient device from the beginnings of democracy in Athens.

To prevent corruption, all male citizens of Athens were given the opportunity to hold public office or sit on a jury through the unpredictable workings of a kleroterion. This instrument implemented a lottery system that ensured randomized selection of a winner. The integrity of a transparent election process was preserved by placing the kleroterion in public areas, where everyone could observe the proceedings.

At Storm King, Simon's interactive sculpture maintains this alliance between open space and good governance. Her mirror-polished monolith, made from cast resin, functions like a game. Visitors are invited to come together in a group of five and determine what power the winner will be granted. To activate the machine and its randomizing capabilities, participants select a colored chip and insert it into an empty slot, positioning themselves as a potential victor. A hand crank is turned to release four balls that funnel through the kleroterion's interior, knocking out all the chips except for the one belonging to a single winning individual.

Simon's sculpture demonstrates how randomized outcomes can counteract authoritarian forces in a nation, a small group, or a family unit. What if questions such as "Who decides what's for dinner?" and "Who decides if we go to war?" were determined by chance and the pull of a lever? *Kleroterion*—the presentation of which coincides with the presidential election season in the United States—asks what might be lost or gained through this process of randomized resolution and invites everyone to participate. The sculpture spotlights the ways that decisions are made and the dynamics of both a family and our political system.

On view through November 11, 2024

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 the digital guide on Bloomberg Connects and the tips and techniques for onsite engagement document on p. 8 for more inspiration.

MAP: Access an up-to-date map of Storm King on our [“Plan Your 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.

TARYN SIMON, KLEROTERION

Continue exploring the themes of decision-making and democracy with your students at Storm King. Consider how the work is sited in Storm King's landscape. Engage in close looking to examine materials.

ENGAGEMENT

Use the kleroterion. Organize your students (including teachers and chaperones) into groups of five. Have each group use the kleroterion, asking a question to determine what power the winner will be granted. To maximize your time with the artwork, it may be helpful to divide your students into groups ahead of time. Each group can ask the same question or different ones. Afterwards, they might journal about their experience or discuss it with a partner. Some guiding questions might be: what was the experience like for those whose chip was selected? What about for everyone else? Does this seem like a fair method of making decisions? *Why or why not? Please use caution, chips may eject quickly.*

View the work from multiple angles. While students are waiting for their turn to use the kleroterion, ask them what they notice about the artwork in person, which they did not notice when viewing photos in class. Ask students about the work's size and scale. How do they think their experience might be different if the sculpture was smaller, or wider, or higher? Students might take photos or make sketches that include part of the sculpture and part of the landscape.

Consider materials and location. Ask students what materials they think the work is made of. What choices did Taryn Simon make about materials? Taryn Simon's family owned and operated an arcade in Times Square. Can you see the influence of an arcade game in this piece? How does the kleroterion incorporate elements of gaming? Be specific. Taryn Simon has stated that the work is placed in the Storm King landscape to mimic the placement of kleroterions in open public places in ancient Greece. Why might the artist have chosen to place the kleroterion in this location at Storm King?

ARTWORK LOCATION

#850 Taryn Simon,
Kleroterion, 2024



Kleroterion is located within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the main entrance.

This route includes paved paths, unpaved paths, and grass.

For more information about accessibility, please contact groups@stormkingartcenter.org.

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. The digital guide and Storm King [website](#) can provide additional information about each artwork, and 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. Download the Bloomberg Connects App via the QR code below.



Post-Visit

REFLECT

Ask students to individually journal or talk with a partner about their visit to Storm King. What do they remember about the artwork and the landscape they experienced?

For younger students: Ask students about their thoughts on making decisions by sortition. Could they imagine using this process to make decisions at home or in the classroom? What are some examples of questions or issues in your classroom that could be decided on using this method?

For older students: Ask students about their thoughts on sortition democracy. Could they envision election by lottery for local, state, or federal representatives? What about for student government at their school? Could it lead to more effective government through a more diverse and representative group of legislators? Or does modern political office require specialized knowledge and skills? Get the conversation started by creating a T-chart of the advantages vs. disadvantages of sortition, as modeled on pages 6-10 of the [Sortition Foundation Resource Guide for Educators](#).

ART EXPLORATION

Following the discussion on decision-making in the classroom, ask students to design a machine for use in your classroom. Students should consider the following: size, materials, accessibility, usability, and location in the room. Using Taryn Simon's diagram for *Kleroterion*, ask students to sketch out their proposed machines. Do a gallery walk to view each sketch or ask each group to present their design. They should speak about how it would work and make a case for why it should be selected. Then, take a vote (using whatever method you choose) on which machine would serve the classroom best.

Resources

Storm King Art Center Collection

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

Exhibition website for Taryn Simon, *Kleroterion*

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/210>

Wikipedia entry on kleroterion

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleroterion>

CNRS News (the French National Center for Scientific Research) video of a reconstructed kleroterion and how it would work

<https://news.cnrs.fr/videos/the-machine-that-selected-the-citizens-of-athens>

TED-Ed video on Athenian Democracy

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-did-democracy-really-mean-in-athens-melissa-schwartzberg>

Sortition Foundation Resource Guide for Educators

https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/sortition_in_schools

Democracy Innovation Academy Video Series

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYW5qHLZjOWH08LQDjji39XgQugoFamGQ&feature=shared>

Storm King Art Center Groups

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