

Ray Yoshida (1930–2009)



Ray Yoshida was born in 1930 in Hawaii. After serving in the military, he studied art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Syracuse University. In 1959, he began teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Over the next four decades, he became an important person on the Chicago's **art scene**. He is known as both a peer and mentor to a group of artists known as the Chicago Imagists.

Yoshida mostly created paintings, but collage was a regular part of his art practice. He carefully cut out images from comics, and then pasted the images into sketchbooks, attached them to paper and canvases, and kept them well organized in small boxes.

Yoshida also collected unique and interesting objects. He often chose and organized objects based on the **elements and principles of art**, such as form, shape, line, and color. Placing objects in different arrangements highlighted the similarities and differences among the objects. He was interested in how placing two different objects next to each other could change their meaning. Yoshida acknowledged that living in and among these objects also changed him.

His expansive collection ranges from works of art by **self-taught artists** and fellow art professors to souvenirs and treasures found at flea markets to ritual masks of New Guinea.

Yoshida did not like to talk about his life, but he did enjoy sharing information about the objects in his collection. These objects and their stories helped him connect to the people in his life. Yoshida's process of discovering and collecting these objects inspired generations of Chicago artists to find their own meaningful connections to the material world around them.

In 2012, the Arts Center acquired the majority of Yoshida's home collection, amounting to approximately 2,600 works. The collection was shown in the 2013 exhibition *Ray Yoshida's Museum of Extraordinary Values* and will be on view at the Art Preserve, opening soon.



Artist Overview

Words to Know

Art Scene

A phrase that refers to the people, places, and events in the visual arts at a specific period of time. For example, someone could say that New York City has an exciting art scene because it contains lots of galleries and museums and many artists live there.

Elements and Principles of Art

Seventeen different concepts that can comprise the foundation of an art practice. The elements of art are color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value. The 10 principles of art are balance, emphasis, harmony, movement, pattern, proportion, repetition, rhythm, unity, and variety.

Self-Taught Artists

Artists who did not go to art school or receive formal training in art.

**John Michael
Kohler Arts Center**

Try it!

1. Go to a place where you keep objects that you collect or that are important to you. Observe the objects just as they are while independently journaling or having a conversation with another person to answer the following:

Describe or draw the objects. *What are their most important characteristics? Are they tall? Small? What are they made out of? What color are they? Where did they come from? Why do you like them? Why are they organized in this way? Does the way they are organized right now tell you anything about the objects?*

2. Decide, independently or as a group, how to rearrange the objects either in the same place or in a different space. You can remove objects from or add new objects to the arrangement.

3. Through journaling or conversation, answer the following:

Has the meaning of the objects changed now in their new arrangement? Why or why not?

Additional Resources and Extensions

- Repeat this activity with the same or different objects. Reflect on how the experience changes, now that you have practiced the activity.
- Look at more images of Yoshida's artwork and his collections at jmkac.org/collections
- Learn about the Chicago Imagists at chicagoimagists.com
- Try Ray Yoshida's collage process. Cut out images, such as comics, and then organize them in containers and create collages on paper or canvases.

For K-12 Educators

Suggested National Standard Connections

Visual Arts Reflecting 7.1

Anchor Standard
Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Enduring Understanding
Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.

Visual Arts Creating 3.1

Anchor Standard
Refine and complete artistic work.

Enduring Understanding
Artist and designers develop excellence through practice and constructive critique, reflecting on, revising, and refining work over time.

