



Artist Jun Kaneko **Title** Five Dangos

Introduction

The ‘Dango’ series are oval sculptures that resemble vases without openings. Dango means ‘dumpling’ or ‘closed form’ in Japanese. These, hand built, ceramic works stand about 7 feet in height and each is covered in Kaneko’s signature geometric patterns. Even though the five Dangos were not created specifically for the Riverwalk, they are integrated into the space of the plaza. They were carefully chosen for the Hub Spot, both shifting the energy of the space while respecting it as well. The five Dangos will enliven this space and, as Kaneko said, “shake the air” around them.

Jun Kaneko was born and raised in Japan and now lives in Omaha, Nebraska. He began his art career as a painter but became interested in sculptural ceramics in graduate school. Kaneko sculptures are included in more than 70 museum collections and he has realized more than 30 public art commissions in the United States and Japan. The artist has been commissioned to design the production of *Madama Butterfly* for Opera Omaha, *Fidelio* for the Opera Company of Philadelphia and *The Magic Flute* for the San Francisco Opera.

Discussion Questions

- How would you describe this art work to someone who could not see it?
- What do you wonder about this art piece?
- The artist of the five Dangos has said they will, “shake the air” around them. What does this mean to you? Why?
- The word Dango means ‘dumpling’ or ‘closed form’ in Japanese. How does this influence your thinking about this art work?
- Jun Kaneko has stated it is important to “consider the space that is given” when creating public art. Think about the Des Moines Riverwalk. What considerations might an artist make when creating for this space? If you were the artist, what would you influence your work?

Literature

Kaneko at Work: The Dango En Pein Air by Arthur Danto
 A visual look at the work of Jun Kaneko for all ages

Shapes by Philip Yenawine
 Connect the geometric shapes found on the Dangos to this book, perfect for young children. Follow along with the author as he poses questions about shapes for readers as they hunt through a visual feast of twentieth century art.

Clay Boy by Mirra Ginsburg
 Jun Kaneko is recognized as one of the foremost ceramic sculptors in the world and through this story early childhood and elementary audiences can connect the use of clay to this Russian folktale about a boy of clay who devours all in sight until a goat ruins his appetite. Illustrations include vibrant paintings

When Clay Sings by Byrd Baylor
 Elementary through high school audiences can take a historical look at the influences of clay through this investigation of how the lives of an ancient people are influenced by pottery

Artist Jun Kaneko
 American, born Japan
 1942

Status In Progress

Location General Downtown,
 Principal Riverwalk

On the westside of
 The Des Moines River
 At the “Hub Spot”
 (pavilion) on Water Street
 and Court Avenue

Credit Supported by the Jim
 and Helen Hubbell
 Foundation and the
 Greater Des Moines
 Public Art Foundation

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The educational resources are designed to deepen and enhance the experiences and understanding of public art in Greater Des Moines. These resources are intended for families and educators to adapt to the needs of their individual children and/or classes.

Internet Resources

Kaneko-A Nebraska Story <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvobrQGkzNw>

A video overview of Jun Kaneko's adventures and views while creating the "open space for the mind" building in Nebraska
elementary-high school

Jun Kaneko: Special Project, 2004-2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvobrQGkzNw>

Jun Kaneko discusses the topic of "ma", scale and use of open space in this video
elementary-high school

Art 21: Ecology <http://video.pbs.org/video/1239798902/>

Artists explore how our understanding of the natural world becomes deeply cultural in this video that can be connected to the decision making process in the production of public art
preschool-high school

The Magic Flute San Francisco Opera <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4yxYBu1y3I&noredirect=1>

Preview a video of the production of The Magic Flute Opera with costumes and sets designed by artist Jun Kaneko
preschool-high school

Jun Kaneko Studio Visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meFCbeMqwo4&feature=related&noredirect=1>

Visit Jun Kaneko's studio viewing his tools and art in progress while hearing reasoning and thinking from the artist himself
preschool-high school

Sioux City Art Center Studio <http://www.siouxcityartcenter.org/collections/item/dango.html>

The Sioux City Art Center provides a written overview of Kaneko's Dangos describing both the process and historical context
middle school-high school

Art Activities

Dango Lesson Plans <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/schoolservices/%20%20checkntoss/kaneko.htm>

Preschool-elementary Interdisciplinary lesson plan discussing lines, shapes, patterns and colors used in Kaneko's Dangos

Community Explorations <http://dx.cooperhewitt.org/resources/lessonplan/community-explorations/>

Elementary interdisciplinary lesson plans focused on community planning for green spaces

Design as a Tool for Community Action Lesson Plans

<http://dx.cooperhewitt.org/resources/lessonplan/design-as-a-tool-for-community-action/>

Middle school and high school interdisciplinary unit asking student to employ the five stages of design as they work to identify and solve issues within their community

The J. Paul Getty Museum Sculptural Space Lesson Plans

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/contemporary_art/lesson04.html

Sculptural Spaces lesson plan for middle and high school students addressing the planning and problem solving artists use as they create site specific outdoor sculpture

Art Inspired Lessons Plans <http://artinspired.pbworks.com/w/page/13819572/Environment%20Lesson%20Ideas>

Art inspired environmental lesson plans focused on illustrating how to use design and art to promote a healthy environment and a peaceful, sustainable world