

Unit 2 Appreciate

Peiced Together

"Good things come in small packages," they say.

Indeed, some cultures around the world appreciate the importance of small things, often putting them together to create amazing works of art. Often, practical need or creative desire plays a key role in such efforts.

Stitched Together

Patchwork, whose beauty has long been appreciated in many cultures across the globe, is a type of needlework that involves sewing scraps of fabric together to create a larger piece of art. Every culture is proud of its own patterns, including Koreans, who take pride in their unique style, jogakbo. Created during the Joseon dynasty, it is a type of traditional wrapping cloth made by stitching small pieces of fabric into a large square or rectangle. Frugal women did not want to waste any fabric and found ways to reuse it. However, jogakbo was much more than just repurposing fabric. It often told the creator's life story because a finished piece contained fabric scraps from her wedding skirt, her husband's shirt, and her children's clothes. The practical need to repurpose leftover patches gave birth to a novel art form.

The beauty of jogakbo lies in its design, which results from stitching together patches of various shapes, sizes, and colors in a seemingly improvised manner. Stitching such random patches into a perfect square or rectangle requires artistic sensitivity, a high level of skill, careful planning, and long hours stitching. The desire for creative excellence resulted in harmonious combinations of patches in various colors, shapes, and sizes, which have been compared to modern abstract paintings, such as those of Piet Mondrian or Paul Klee. Jogakbo was a useful activity in which leftover pieces of cloth were transformed into a pursuit of beauty and utility, eventually becoming an important part of traditional Korean craft art.

Assembled Together

The Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, France and Nasir al-Mulk mosque in Shiraz, Iran amaze their visitors with brilliant glass window panels through which astonishing light of vigorous colors penetrates. These panels are called stained-glass windows and are made up of colored pieces of glass assembled together to form large windows. In Europe and the Middle East, the techniques for stainedglass windows advanced quickly during the Medieval period, when religious buildings got bigger to accommodate more worshipers and prayers. Small pieces of glass assembled next to one another were not only more practical for construction but also able to tell a story. Since most people were illiterate at that time, the images placed on the windows helped them understand religious messages that they might otherwise have been unable to grasp.

Making a stained-glass window is a process in which intricacy is required. It involves creating durable glass sheets and staining them, cutting them into desired shapes, and assembling them into prepared designs. Each step requires expert craftspeople working together. Though originally used in religious structures, stained-glass windows found their way into a variety of modern buildings, including residential homes. These little pieces are now recognized worldwide as an important form of creative art, whose splendor wouldn't have been acknowledged without the glass artists' desire for beauty sparked by a practical need.

Strung Together

Throughout the ages and across all cultures, there have been small decorative objects with a hole for threading called beads. In its simplest form, beadwork can involve threading a few beads together on a single string to make a simple bracelet or necklace, or on a larger scale, to form beaded bags, clothing, or even wall-hangings. Beadwork is ancient, evidenced by the findings of beads dating back to the Stone Age. Back then, people strung bones, shells, or rocks together to hang around their neck. As cultures and societies evolved over time, beadwork became a form of personal expression, a symbol of social class, or even a talisman to drive away bad luck.

Interestingly, some regions have particularly rich traditions. The Ndebele tribe of South Africa, for example, is famed for intricate dresses made of glass beads. Different designs serve as a means of marking different developmental stages of a woman's life. An unmarried girl may wear a square apron onto which thousands of glass beads were hand-sewn, while a married woman might wear a five-paneled apron, along with beaded necklaces and a beaded cape.

Similarly, beadwork is an essential aspect of many Native American cultures. Beadwork powerfully expresses cultural identity, reflecting a sense of continuity across generations.

Pieced Together by Need and Desire

Plato once remarked that "our need will be the real creator." When need or desire arises, different communities willingly attach small, simple, insignificant everyday objects to one another to generate a new form of creative work that is more beautiful and more practical than the mere sum of its parts. The Greek philosopher may have recognized that the process for all things creative begins from within, from need and desire, to express artistic instincts or to maximize the utility of things available. Cultures may vary on the surface, but they all seem to share some common elements, often universal and essential, rooted deep in human nature.

Unit 2 Go Beyond

A Journey to Samoa

Samoa is a Polynesian island country, consisting of two main islands (Upolu and Savai'i), located in the South Pacific. It is known for its year-round warm tropical weather, stunning beaches, and gorgeous waterfalls. Samoa even served as one of the sources of inspiration for the directors of the movie Moana released in 2016. It is a stunning island country that preserves its traditions, history, and distinct way of life.

Samoans Have No Walls

A "fale" is a traditional Samoan house, with round-shaped thatched huts, supported by wood columns, but with no walls. The architecture of fale is very well-suited to the Samoan tropical climate. Its open-sided structure not only allows air to circulate freely to keep the space cool but also allows strong winds to pass through, enabling it to resist extreme weather events. The unique structure of the fale mirrors the Samoan people's values of openness and community. Its open structure allows people to come and go freely, creating a sense of belonging.

Samoans Were Time Travelers

Samoa and American Samoa are different countries, even though they are next to each other in the South Pacific Ocean. Although these two countries used to be in the same time zone, the situation completely changed in 2011. On December 29, 2011, Samoans skipped December 30, and went straight to December 31, jumping 24 hours into the future. This happened because the Samoan government decided to switch sides of the International Date Line. This was to align the time with New Zealand, Australia, and other Asian countries, to improve their business transactions. Samoa is now on the opposite side of the International Date Line from American Samoa. They are just half an hour apart by flight, but there is a 24-hour time difference between them. If you fly from Samoa to American Samoa, in about 30 minutes you will return to yesterday!