

NSU ART MUSEUM FORT LAUDERDALE

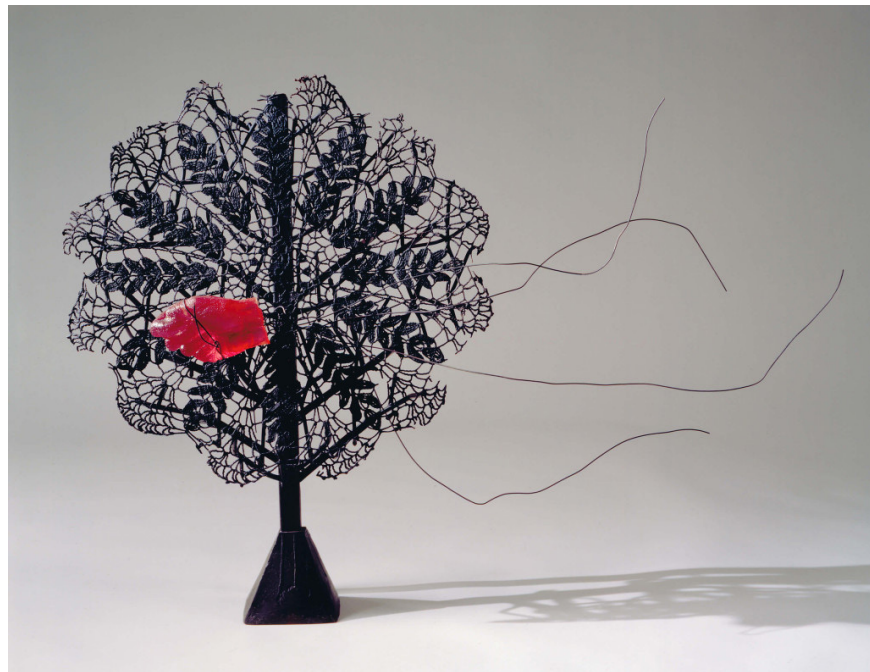
Creativity Exploration

Virtual Mindfulness Module
Symbols and Objects that Tell a Story

Works from NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale's permanent collection inspire this series of independent mindfulness experiences and art prompts for creating in the comfort of your own home. Learn about art and connect to your own creativity and wellness through inspiring ideas that promote personal discovery.

#NSUMindfulModules

NSU Art Museum's Creativity Exploration workshops promote the benefits of creative exploration and the mind-to-body experience. Studies have shown that just 45 minutes of creative activity a day can reduce stress and improve mental clarity and well-being. Expand your perceptions of forms as you increase brain connectivity through visual and cognitive stimulation in this virtual workshop designed by educator Lark Keeler, a specialist in mindfulness education.



Kiki Smith, *Comet*, 1996. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; promised gift of David Horvitz and Francie Bishop Good

Symbols and Objects that Tell a Story

In this mindfulness exercise, we will identify and reflect upon symbols that tell our life story.

- Find a comfortable and alert way of sitting
- Take a cleansing deep breath and feel gravity holding you in place. Be comforted in your space.
- Relax your face, neck, and shoulders. Let your hands be calm and relaxed.
- Visualize your favorite color. Fine tune your mind's eye to just the right shade.
Why is this your favorite color? Breathe in deeply as you consider this question and the answer(s) that you discover. Notice the visual imagery that you receive when moving through this exercise.
- Think about symbols that are meaningful to you in your life. Breathe deeply while you consider the memories and history attached to these questions. Take time for ideas and visualizations to come to you. Breathe deeply and relax as the ideas flow in.
- Take a deep inhalation and exhalation. Reflect upon each of the meaningful symbols that come to mind. Are they cultural, religious, historic, personal, connected to your identity, or an important memory? Take a breath considering each...
- Take another deep inhalation and exhalation. Are these symbols objects in your life? Do these objects tell a story? What memories arise?
- If there are any other objects or symbols that come to mind, reflect upon those with a satisfying and cleansing breath...
- What story could these objects and symbols tell? How could you visualize this story unfolding and opening? Breathe deeply and imagine combinations of the ideas, objects, and symbols.
- Take a deep breath, breathing in gratitude for these things and ideas, and exhale in satisfaction for a story that is all your own.

Artist Kiki Smith

Inspired by the myths and ancient stories of humankind, Kiki Smith weaves folktales and fairytales into fantastical sculptures, and works on paper. She investigates these stories and presents them to the viewer in installations and sculptures that spark wonderment and curiosity for the mystical qualities that come through in her work. Using glass, textiles, printmaking, porcelain and metal, Smith invites us into a magical realm of storytelling through her use of objects, symbolism, and masterful installation and assemblage.

Kiki Smith's work invites us to look at the world of myths, legends, and creation stories, but also at ideas and notions of nature and the human body, exploring life and death, and the forces governing both. Her work is charged with familiarity, whether it be a symbolic gesture of a hand, or an image of a wolf. She explores the power of these symbols, loaded with cultural significance, ideas, and tales.

In the sculpture, *Comet*, we are reminded of the form of a tree and a fruit shaped as a pink resin-cast hand, bound tightly to the branches. Smith references this imagery, in connection with a doily, a symbol of traditional women's work, cast in bronze. Cultural references to trees and forbidden fruit come to mind, as well as the story of Eve.

Artmaking Ideas

Thinking about the work of Kiki Smith, begin to imagine how you could tell a personal narrative through objects, symbols, and images. Think about how these assemblages could be documented with your cell phone camera.

- Find objects and symbols in your home that hold special meaning. Spend time thoughtfully gathering them. Bring them together and spend time with each item. Look at each object with a "beginner's mind," as if you were discovering the object or symbol for the first time. Explore and enjoy the object. Use all of your senses.
-Draw or sculpt the objects if they are not in your home and tangible.-
- Gaze at your collection of objects or symbols. Take a deep breath as you scan the grouping for commonalities. Do you see colors, ideas, shapes, textures, materials, or history that might be connecting them together?
- Organize, arrange, and curate the objects and ideas. What story can you tell by grouping them and clustering them? How does the presentation change the narrative you are telling? Where might the objects be placed, or staged, to enhance the story? Consider stacking, categorizing, or even using wire, string, or yarn to connect things together.
- Take photos using your cell phone. Does the story change when adding filters, or looking at the arrangement in a black-and-white image? What would the title of the image be?

We'd love to see your experience! Take a photo and tag @nsuartmuseum



Creativity Exploration is sponsored by the Charles P. Ferro Foundation.



Lark Keeler is a museum educator at NSU Art Museum and a visual arts teacher at Saint Andrew's Lower School. Over the past 20 years she has taught visual arts in schools and museums, working with students of all ages and abilities throughout South Florida. Keeler was awarded the Florida Art Education Association's Museum Educator of the Year in 2010 and since has participated in the National Guild for Community Arts Education Leadership Institute and the National Art Education Association's School for Art Leaders. She has received a certification in Mindfulness Fundamentals and is a certified MindUP educator. She now serves as a board member for the Florida Alliance for Arts Education, Florida Art Education Association's Past-President, Secretary for the National Caucus on the Spiritual in Art Education, and as a member of the Delray Beach Public Art Advisory Board.



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