



Ruth Asawa kneeling on the floor of her dining room with tied-wire sculptures, 1963. Photo by Imogen Cunningham

Marguerite Wildenhain), San Francisco Museum of Art, 1954 § São Paulo Biennial Exhibition, Brazil, 1955 § *The Whitney Sculpture Annual*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1956, 1958 § *Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900–2000*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2000

SELECTED COLLECTIONS: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco § Guggenheim Museum, New York § Oakland Museum of California § Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Cornell, Daniell. *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa: Contours in the Air*. San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. § Harris, Mary Emma. *The Arts at Black Mountain College*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987. § Rubenstein, Charlotte Streifer. *American Women Sculptors*. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990. § *Ruth Asawa: A Retrospective View*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1973.

I like wire because it's so transparent. You can see right through it and it makes shadows and it defines the sculpture better than the sculpture itself when you get a shadow on it. And I like the quality of the transparency. It's sort of like insect wings and bubbles—you know, soap bubbles. I like that lightness and the kind of fragility of it and I'm pleased with how it looks.

RUTH ASAWA
Interview, *Sundays on 7*,
KGO-TV, October 1995

ACCLAIMED FOR HER innovative biomorphic sculptures in wire as well as her activism in arts education, Ruth Asawa was encouraged as a child by a grade school teacher to pursue art. Her dream of attending either the Chouinard Art Institute or the Otis Art Institute, both in Los Angeles, was derailed by Executive Order 9066, as she was forced to finish high school while interned at the relocation center in Rohwer, Arkansas. However, during those years she was able to apply to college at any school not on the West Coast, and she was admitted to

Milwaukee State Teachers College. There, she studied drawing, painting, printmaking, and jewelry. Her plans to become a teacher were discouraged by anti-Japanese sentiments of the period, resulting in her decision to attend the experimental Black Mountain College. The three years at Black Mountain transformed Asawa's life. She was especially challenged by the process orientation of former Bauhaus teacher Josef Albers and inspired by the ideas of architect Buckminster Fuller. Black Mountain's democratic structure also influenced Asawa's thinking about art education.

In 1949, Asawa moved to San Francisco, where she married fellow Black Mountain student Albert Lanier. While Lanier established himself as an architect and they raised six children, Asawa experimented with wire sculpture. In the early 1950s, she used a simple coil weaving technique to "draw" both simple and complex forms and volumes inspired by nature. Although some critics felt this work did not constitute sculpture because it was not rigid, Asawa found support in the Northern California textile arts community. Her hanging sculptures, which sometimes measured eighteen feet in length, were exhibited internationally. In retrospect, these works can be related to later process-oriented suspended artworks by Eva Hesse, another Albers student, as well as to the paper-sculpture *tanabata* and origami traditions of Japanese art.

In the early 1960s, Asawa began a new series of wire works recalling tree branches and roots. She also created a series of public works, including fountains, for which she is well known in the San Francisco Bay Area, and which sometimes incorporated human figuration. After a high-profile retrospective in 1973, she worked increasingly in collaboration with schoolchildren, who sometimes modeled complex imagery from bread dough cast in bronze. Her ceramic tile mural at the Alvarado School in San Francisco has become an important model of collaboration for artists in the schools. Asawa often speaks publicly on behalf of the role of art in enriching the lives of children in the public schools and the larger community. She has received numerous honors and has been acknowledged in local press as "San Francisco's best-loved artist."

Bae, Yoong

BORN: November 19, 1928, Seoul, Korea

DIED: November 14, 1992, Oakland, CA

RESIDENCES: 1928–1974, Seoul, Korea § 1974–1992, San Francisco Bay Area, principally Oakland, CA

MEDIA: painting, printmaking, and sculpture

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS: Soker-Kaseman Gallery, San Francisco, 1983 § Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea, 1993 § *Yoong Bae: Late Works*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 1996

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS: International Graphic Art Exhibition, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, 1960 § East West Gallery, Hong Kong, 1979 § World Print Gallery, San Francisco, 1983

SELECTED COLLECTIONS: Asian Art Museum, San Francisco § The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Kim, Kumja Paik, and Margaret Juhae Lee. *Yoong Bae: Late Works*. San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 1996. § *Yoong Bae (1928–1992)*. Seoul: Myrung Lip, 1993.

I feel that the artist has an obligation to preserve and even reinterpret the traditional arts. I don't prefer to change them, I learn from them and then use them as I adopt them to my needs.

YOONG BAE

Kim and Lee, *Yoong Bae: Late Works*, 9

IN 1963, YOONG BAE spent four months in the United States through the Ford Foundation's Young Artists Program. After visiting the San Francisco Bay Area, he resolved to return to make the area his home. By the time he moved to Oakland's

Yoong Bae, ca. 1961





Kenjilo Nanao, 1961

San Francisco Art Association annuals in 1953, 1954, and 1957. Throughout the 1950s Nakano worked as a freelance fashion illustrator in San Francisco. She stopped painting in the early 1960s.

Nanao, Kenjilo

BORN: July 26, 1929, Aomori, Japan

RESIDENCES: 1929–1955, Aomori and Tokyo, Japan § 1955–1960, Tokyo, Japan § 1960–1963, San Francisco, CA § 1963–1964, New York, NY § 1964–1965, Tokyo, Japan § 1965–1967, San Francisco, CA § 1967–1972, Marin County, CA § 1972–present, Berkeley, CA

MEDIA: printmaking and painting

ART EDUCATION: 1948–1951, Asagaya Art Academy, Tokyo § 1960–1963, 1968–1969, San Francisco Art Institute § 1963–1964, Brooklyn Museum Art School

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS: Brooklyn Museum Art School, 1964 § Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA, 1972 § San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Rental Gallery, 1998 § *Kenjilo Nanao*, Aomori Prefectural Museum, Aomori, Japan, 2004

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS: The Printer's Art, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1967 § Northwest Printmakers' 39th International Exhibition, Seattle Art Museum, 1968 § California Printmakers, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1971 § *Eight West Coast Printmakers*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, 1978 § *Beyond Words*, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA, 1981 § American Academy of Arts and Letters Invitational Exhibition, New York, NY, 2003

SELECTED COLLECTIONS: Brooklyn Museum § Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco § Los Angeles County Museum of Art § Museum of Modern Art, New York § Oakland Museum of California

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Baro, Gene. *30 Years of American Printmaking*. Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1976. § *Kenjilo Nanao*. Aomori, Japan: Aomori Prefectural Museum, 2004. § Nanao, Kenjilo. *Kenjilo Nanao*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1972. § Nanao, Kenjilo. CAAABS project interview. January 29, 2006. Berkeley, CA. § Secrist, Sally W., and N. Ann Howard. *4th International Exhibition of Botanical Art and Illustration*. Pittsburgh: The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, 1977.

Even though I had been dealing with a figurative subject (in the prints), my concern was with an abstract message.

KENJILO NANAO

Art Now West Coast Gallery Guide 10 (October 1999)

AN ARTIST SINCE his youth, Kenjilo Nanao came to San Francisco at the age of thirty-one to attend the San Francisco Art Institute. While there, he studied with James Weeks, Elmer Bischoff, and William Brown, but Nathan Oliveira proved to be his biggest influence. Nanao, a painter, began to explore printmaking under the guidance of Oliveira, who encouraged exploration and experimentation within the medium. As a result, Nanao for the next twenty-five years worked primarily in printmaking, establishing a reputation for his skilled lithographic works.

In 1963 Nanao went to New York, attending the Brooklyn Museum Art School. At the time, many students from Japan were studying at the school, and he often served as an impromptu translator in class. While in New York, he used the printmaking workshop at the Pratt Institute and gained an appreciation for the freedom he had experienced at the San Francisco Art Institute, as instruction in New York was more rigid and technically inclined. After returning briefly to Tokyo,

Nanao and his wife, Gail Chadell, returned to the Bay Area in 1965. Nanao received a Ford Foundation grant for study at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in 1968 and received an M.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1969. In 1970, he began twenty-one years of teaching at California State University, Hayward, developing an impressive printmaking program there while continuing to make and exhibit his own work. Nanao received a National Endowment for the Arts Individual Fellowship in 1980.

Nanao's lithographs are characterized by delicate gradations of color and are often surreal or erotic, which leads to comparisons with Japanese *shunga* prints. In the mid-1980s, Nanao shifted his focus from printmaking to oil painting, both to relieve himself of the taxing physical nature of lithography and to make a mental shift in his work. He also moved from figuration to abstraction, and his abstract paintings with geometric references often employ gold and silver leaf as underpainting beneath vivid hues of blues, yellows, or reds. A career retrospective was held in Nanao's hometown of Aomori, Japan, in 2004.

Ng, Win

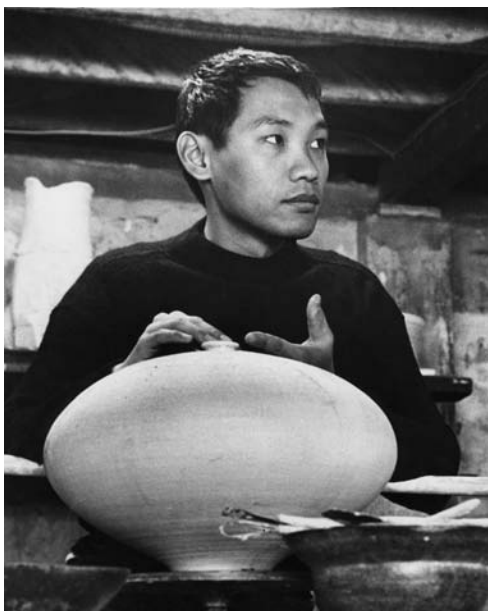
BORN: April 13, 1936, San Francisco, CA

DIED: September 6, 1991, San Francisco, CA

RESIDENCE: 1936–1991, San Francisco, CA

MEDIA: sculpture, ceramics, metalwork, and painting

Win Ng, 1961. Photo by Eddie Murphy



ART EDUCATION: ca. 1956–1959, California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco § 1959–1960, Mills College, Oakland, CA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITION: *The Art of Win Ng*, Chinese Historical Society of America, San Francisco, 2005

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1966 § *8th Annual Exhibition of Ceramic Arts*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1961 § *California Sculptures*, Oakland Museum of California, 1963 § La Jolla Museum, La Jolla, CA, 1965 § *American Potters Today*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1986 § Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA, 1989

SELECTED COLLECTIONS: Museum of Arts and Design, New York § Oakland Museum of California

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Hicks, Allen R., ed. *The Art of Win Ng*. San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, in association with the Win Ng Trust and Allen R. Hicks, 2005. § Riegger, Hal. "The Pottery of Win Ng." *Ceramics Monthly* 11 (April 1963): 15–17. § Wechsler, Jeffrey, ed. *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970*. New York: Abrams in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 1997.

In looking into the work of antiquity and into history, I feel into it—how those people worked, their social environment and their problems.

WIN NG

Riegger, "The Pottery of Win Ng"

WIN NG WAS ONE of eight children born to Cantonese-speaking immigrants in San Francisco's Chinatown. His first art studio, where he explored painting and stoneware ceramics, was set up in the basement of his parents' home, an indication of his family's support for his art making. An early influence was **Jade Snow Wong**, who employed Ng when he was in high school.

Ng studied briefly at San Francisco City College and San Francisco State College (now University) before serving in the U.S. Army as a construction drafter, which enabled him to visit and exhibit in Europe. During the late 1950s after his discharge, he resumed his studies at the California School of Fine Arts and began to exhibit his work nationally. He interacted with a variety of artists during this period, including Peter Voukos, who visited Ng's studio. After graduating in 1959, he pursued a graduate degree from Mills College, receiving an M.F.A. in 1960.

Ng often worked in series, repeating a shape or theme many times in order to perfect its expression. His pieces included large-scale, abstract forms as well as vessels and sculpture recalling Chinese lamps, which innovatively incorporated abstract expressionism's dynamic gestures in their rich surface