

BOJAGI

CREATING SOMETHING OUT OF SCRAPS



Bojagi
accession numbers 2015.266
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bojagi-105138>



Bojagi
accession number 2015.72
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bojagi-104900>



Bojagi
accession number 2018.8
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/patchwork-bojagi-wrapping-cloth-107872>



Bojagi, accession number 2015.73
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bojagi-104902>



Bojagi, accession number 2018.10
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bojagi-107874>



Bojagi, accession number 2015.316
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bojagi-106354>



Bojagi, accession number 2015.71
<https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bojagi-104901>

It seems that these days we have been given the opportunity to be more creative--whether we want to or not. Throughout their history, Koreans have also had many opportunities to express their creativity, both in good times and in bad. Using fabric scraps from silk clothing and other projects, Koreans developed a unique art form called *bojagi*. To make one of these pieces, artists sew together scraps of silk to make a patchwork fabric that can be used for a variety of purposes, from wall or table decorations to gift wrap.

By the time of the Shang Dynasty in China around 1000 BCE, the use of sericulture, or raising silkworms for the production of silk, was already greatly developed. The growth of mulberry trees (whose leaves provide the only food caterpillars can live upon) changed the countryside. 1000 pounds of mulberry leaves were needed to feed 20,000 worms throughout their lifetime, and 2500 silkworms were typically needed to produce just one pound of silk. The process of creating materials like the silk used to make court robes started with weaving the silk threads that were obtained from the silkworm's cocoons into wide panels, then embroidering designs with intricate patterns, sometimes using gold or silver thread, before cutting the panel and sewing the pieces together. This process, which was also used in Korea and Japan to make robes for the upper class, produced scraps of material. Because of the time and expense invested in making silk, artists needed to figure out how to use these scraps to make something worthwhile. *Bojagi*, a traditional Korean wrapping cloth, is used to cover, store, decorate, or carry gifts and objects of everyday use. The specific names of a *bojagi* differentiate its type of construction: embroidered *bojagi* are known as *subo* and patchwork or scrap *bojagi* are called *chogak bo*.

This is where some of you may be sweating . . . don't worry, you are not going to be asked to sew! Instead, you are going to create a paper version of *bojagi* using the materials in your kit. As you can see, *bojagi* is somewhat like a patchwork quilt. Some designs are more symmetrical while others are more random. The white background paper and scraps of colored papers included in this project are a variety of traditional Asian mulberry papers, the kind that would be made from the tree whose leaves are used to feed the silkworm. Some papers are dyed, some include flowers, some include gold threads . . . there is quite a variety!

Your goal for this project is to cut these pieces into smaller squares and rectangles and arrange the pieces on the white paper in a way that creates a sense of balance, unity, variety, and movement. Note the ways that the examples from the Detroit Institute of Arts (seen above) fill the entire space with color, leaving just a small white border around the edges. If you type in the accession number (the number that tells us when the museum received that piece of art) on the Detroit Institute of Arts' webpage www.dia.org you can see these works up close. How can you place certain sizes and colors so that a viewer's eye looks throughout your entire piece? You are using the elements of color and shape with the principles of design including balance, unity, variety, and movement.

ASSIGNMENT

Supplies: 6" squares of three different colors/styles of mulberry paper or other colored papers
8"x 8" piece of matboard or heavy cardboard, covered with a sheet of white *hanshi* or construction paper
scissors, glue stick

Take the scraps of paper you have in your kits and cut them into smaller squares and rectangles, no larger than 2 inches by 2 inches. If you want a challenge, you can cut some triangle and diamond shapes too, but please stay away from circles as they are not typically part of the traditional *bojagi* art form. Arrange the cut shapes on the white background, making sure not to overlap the shapes too much (a little overlap is fine, but there should not be more than $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch overlapping on any one side).

When you have figured out a way to arrange these pieces to create a sense of balance (an evenness of colors and shapes, not necessarily in a pattern but it can be), unity (togetherness), variety (uniqueness) and movement (where your eye does not focus on one point of emphasis but instead moves from piece to piece), then you can begin gluing down the shapes using your glue stick. You can keep a border of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch around the edge if you like, but it is not necessary. Once you have glued your shapes down, make sure to allow the papers to completely dry before stacking anything else on top. Please remember to sign your artwork as well!

