

JUNKO IIJIMA

Junko Iijima is a studio artist living in North Portland. She came to the USA as a high school exchange student from Tokyo, Japan. Fascinated by the educational systems and the diversity of people and culture, she continued her studies in the US and received her Masters in Metalsmithing from the University of Oregon. Her work deals with the melding of cultural signifiers from America and Japan. Living in this country for the past 18 years, Junko has witnessed the two countries growing continually closer through the exchanging of peoples and commodities. "In general, people in the United States now have a much clearer understanding of Japanese culture compared to 18 years ago."

I am attracted to objects which retain their cultural identities, obvious stereotypes. I observe and investigate the mixing of cultures through their commodities; how objects from different cultures influence and impact one another, in particular, the intertwining of the contemporary culture of Japan, where I'm from, and America, where I live. Through my work, I explore the cultural and social underpinnings of both decorative and functional objects. Recently I have been exploring traditional cast-iron patterning from Japanese Nanbu Ironware (best known as black iron tea kettle) while considering pop culture forms. Small bronze sculptures and the drawings demonstrate the melding of cultural signifiers through commodities, and are part of an on-going study and examination of visual languages; creating hybrids of the past and present, from the East and the West.

