
Artifacts

After two years of research and development, the Dallas Museum of Art's Education Department is offering visitors a new, one-on-one learning experience with the Museum's collections and temporary exhibitions. *Artifacts*, the interactive video computer programs which are located in the Library Resource area of the Gateway Gallery, provide visitors the opportunity to access information pertaining to the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions not found on text labels in the galleries. Besides offering an exciting learning experience in itself, these programs provide the participant additional understanding in viewing and appreciating the actual art.

Mary Mills, Administrator of Visual Resources, has spent two years of intensive research and study creating this system and the programs now being used by the public. Starting with the basic idea of integrating the two mediums of video and computers, she learned not only the technical aspects of video production, but also became a computer programmer out of necessity, since this is the first system of its kind to be developed for art museum use. Combining visual images, through the use of video, with the stored information and access capability of a computer, a simple user-friendly system has been developed. *Artifacts* enable the user to become involved with the program content rather than the mechanical operation of the machine, by the use of a light pen placed directly on a video monitor screen.

In a collaborative effort between the Education and Curatorial Departments, a preliminary program outline dealing with specific subjects was written, reviewed and revised to fit the format of the system. Once a final draft and program flow chart was defined, the components of the video portion, slides and copywork, were gathered and selected to visually exemplify the concepts, then transferred to video tape along with the narration and audio sections. After assembling the visuals, a computer interaction was achieved, interfacing computer text information and graphics with the visual images. Mary Mills modified an Apple computer to meet the particular requirements of the program.



Artifacts, the interactive video computer program designed and installed by Mary Mills, was used by participants during the *Sbogun* exhibit to learn about the Tokugawa heritage.

The final product is a unique combination of new technical fields which enables Museum visitors of all ages to explore and learn about exhibitions at an individual level of interest. *Artifacts* will be nationally introduced in June at the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums, in Washington, D.C. Museum visitors, however, will not have to wait until June, as this unique learning experience is now available at the Dallas Museum of Art.

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