


For Ruth Asawa (1926–2013), drawing served as a center of gravity—the activity she described as her “greatest pleasure and the most difficult.” Although now widely recognized for her wire sculptures, Asawa drew daily. Her exploratory approach to materials, line, surface, and space yielded an impressive range of drawings that speaks to her playful curiosity and technical dexterity as well as her interest in the aesthetic possibilities of the everyday.

From her upbringing on her family’s farm in Southern California, where Asawa dreamily traced shapes along dirt roads in between chores and attended weekly calligraphy lessons, drawing became the foundation of her creative life. When her family was forced to leave their home in 1942 as part of the US government’s World War II isolation policies toward Japanese Americans, the teenage Asawa found salvation in the artists who taught and supported each other in the incarceration camps. In the years that followed, as a student at the progressive Black Mountain College and throughout six decades in San Francisco, Asawa maintained a belief in the power of art to bring about a better future. This ethos guided her work as an educator, community leader, and artist.

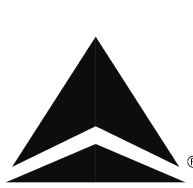
This exhibition highlights drawing as the through line in Asawa’s work. Organized thematically and inspired by her inquisitive approach to making art, the presentation comprises more than one hundred works, many of which have never been exhibited. Together, they capture the boundless energy and generous spirit of Asawa, who believed that “art is not a series of techniques, but an approach to learning, to questioning, and to sharing.”

 Hear from artists and scholars and find access resources at whitney.org/Guide.

 800 Introduction

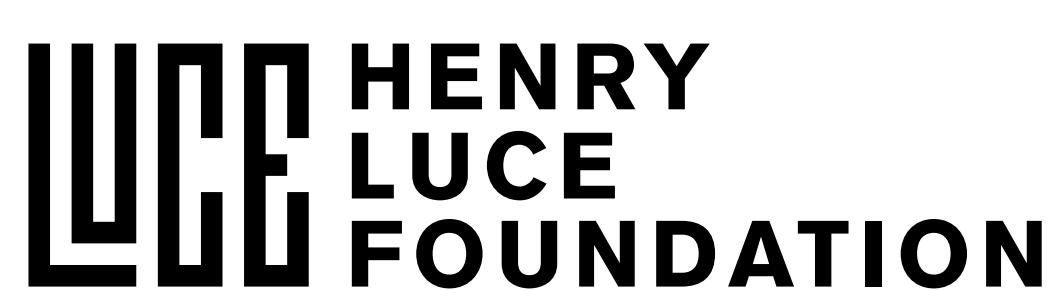
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