

Navajo Saddle Blankets

from the Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American Collection



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TEACHER PACKET

Navajo Saddle Blankets from the Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American Collection

Navajo weaving has a long and rich history that has produced objects ranging from wearing blankets to floor rugs to wall hangings. Saddle blankets are unique in this history in that they have been continuously produced as utilitarian objects.

The horse became important in Navajo culture after the arrival of Spanish explorers in the mid- to late 1500s in what is now the American Southwest. By the mid-1800s weavers began making saddle blankets to replace the sheepskin pads commonly used between the saddle and the back of the horse. Navajo saddle blankets were a prized trade item for use on horses but also became popular as rugs and later as art to be hung on the wall. Weaving techniques such as the double weave and twill weave not only created thick, sturdy blankets appropriate for their intended use but also produced new patterns such as the nested diamond. As new synthetic dyes became available, weavers incorporated more vibrant colors into their designs. Some saddle blanket weavings were more decorative than utilitarian and included fringes and tassels. This led to the Anglo-American term “Sunday Saddle Blanket,” reflecting their use on special occasions.

The Navajo saddle blankets in the Museum’s collection include rare examples of Germantown Sunday Saddle Blankets from the late 1800s and early 1900s, woven with yarns from the woolen mills of Germantown, Pennsylvania, which circulated in the Southwest during the latter part of the 19th century.

Objects in Exhibition



Sunday Saddle Blanket
Weaver Unknown
c.1895-1905
KMA 91.023.210

Sunday Saddle Blankets were mainly decorative items to be used on special occasions. They were never produced in great quantity and so examples are very rare. This Sunday Saddle Blanket is made out of four-ply Germantown yarn and contains a series of serrated squash blossom designs and diamond motifs.



Germantown Double Saddle Blanket
Weaver Unknown
c.1900
KMA 91.023.233

Double saddle blankets are generally about twice the size of single saddle blankets and are folded in half and placed under the saddle to provide extra comfort for the horse. This weaving also has a double pattern, where one half of the blanket has one pattern or design, and the other half has a different pattern or design. When the saddle blanket is folded in half, the user can decide which design to display.



Mohair Saddle Blanket
Weaver unknown
c. 1890
KMA 91.023.241

This is an example of a single saddle blanket with mohair from angora goat. The body of the blanket is handspun wool, whereas the fringe is dyed and tufted mohair.



Germantown Double Saddle Blanket
Weaver Unknown
c. 1900-1910
KMA 91.023.540

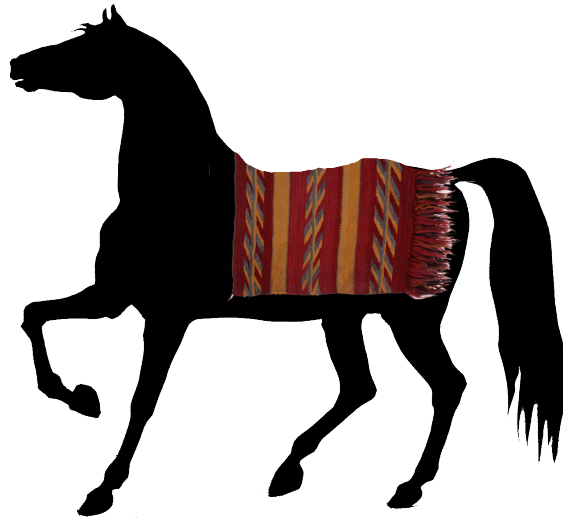
This double saddle blanket is made with yarn produced in Germantown, Pennsylvania and has a narrow striped pattern, which was a favorite of trader John Lorenzo Hubble.



Navajo Horse Bridle
Maker unknown
20th century
KMA 89.016.142

This silver bridle includes conchas and a naja, items that are also popular in jewelry. Conchas often appear on silver-mounted bridles, placed at strategic points such as on either temple. The forehead plate is usually the central decorative feature of the bridle often with a pendant hung from it, such as the naja on this bridle.

Timeline: History of the horse and Navajo Saddle Blankets



Between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago

Horses completely disappeared from North and South America

c. 1300-1500

Historians believe that Navajo migrated to what is now the southwestern United States, already inhabited by Pueblo Indians.

1492

Christopher Columbus lands in the Americas.

1493

The first horses to arrive in the Americas were transported by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage.

c. 1540

The Spanish enter the American southwest, bringing sheep and horses.

1607

Jamestown is settled as part of the Virginia English colony, becoming the first permanent English settlement in what is now the United States.

1600s-early 1860s

Navajos acquire sheep and adopt handweaving techniques suited to wool.

1700s

Extensive trade of Navajo woven textiles.

1775-1783

The American Revolution occurs.

1863

Navajo Long Walk from Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, to Fort Sumner (internment until 1868)

1868

Navajo and United States treaty establishes Navajo reservation.

1870s-1880s

The rise of the cattle industry and trail drives created demand for drovers, all on horseback.

1880s-1990s

Railway travel into the American southwest creates new market for Navajo weavings.

Traders became very influential in the production of weavings, which were heavily marketed through mail-order catalogs.

c. 1900-1915

Navajo saddle blankets became popular for use as rugs during the Arts and Crafts period.

They were perceived as a symbol of the western frontier.

1912

New Mexico and Arizona became 47th and 48th states.

1914-1918

World War I.

1924

Congress declares all Indians born in United States to be citizens.

1938

Navajo Tribal Council formed.

1938-1945

United States enters World War II after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. During the war, the Navajo language was used to create a secret code, and Navajo men were selected to create codes and serve on the front line. These men are recognized as the famous Navajo Code Talkers.

1948

Navajo receive right to vote.

1964

United States Civil Rights Act, Title VII, prohibits discrimination for reasons of race, religion, or national origin.

Moving into the 21st Century

Navajo weavers are experimenting with new felting techniques as well as weaving new saddle blankets with commercial yarns, and creating patterns and colors that reference the blankets of the 1880s and 1890s.

The Story of Saddle Blankets

Saddle blankets were meant to be utilitarian in nature, as there was a need for something that would hold a saddle in place on a horse's back, but that would not slide around. A saddle blanket would keep the moisture off of the horse's back, and would prevent the horse from developing sores or problems with their back. Until the mid-1800s, people were using animal skins with the hair left on as pads (sheepskins were ideal for this). But they would also have to include an additional pad under that, which would be filled with animal hair or a plant fiber such as straw. Thick woven wool saddle blankets proved to be an ideal substitute, especially when folded in half. They would not roll or bunch or move around under the saddles and they were excellent at getting the moisture off of the horse's back.

Horses have been used for transportation, herding sheep, and participating in rodeos. Early Navajo saddle blankets sometimes would include designs that were considered to be protective, used by weavers to protect the rider from harm, either from natural elements or from accidents. Sometimes small pieces of horse hair or pieces of money would be woven into the blanket. Saddle blankets are one of the oldest forms of Navajo weavings continuously made and used by Navajo people.

Many of the weavings produced by the Navajo have consisted of styles and patterns dictated by consumer demand and Anglo-American preferences. Saddle blankets, however, had a more local interest. The "consumers" for these products were the Navajo themselves as well as other Native Americans and cowboys. Many cowboys would spend more money on their saddle blanket than on any other part of their rig, apart from the saddle itself. Quality saddle blankets were of such value that they were sometimes the target of cow-camp thieves. Decorative saddle blankets were used during special occasions to honor the horse and to accentuate the owner's wealth leading to the Anglo-American term "Sunday Saddle Blanket."

After some time traders began to market saddle blankets to other audiences and other types of consumers. They were advertised as child's blankets and rugs and some of the double saddle blankets were even marketed as dress halves because of their size and shape. Today, Navajo saddle blankets are considered collector's items and are seen in many museum collections, where they are displayed as art.

Information retrieved from Navajo Saddle Blankets: Textiles to Ride in the American west Edited by Lane Coulter, 2002.

Loom Drawing

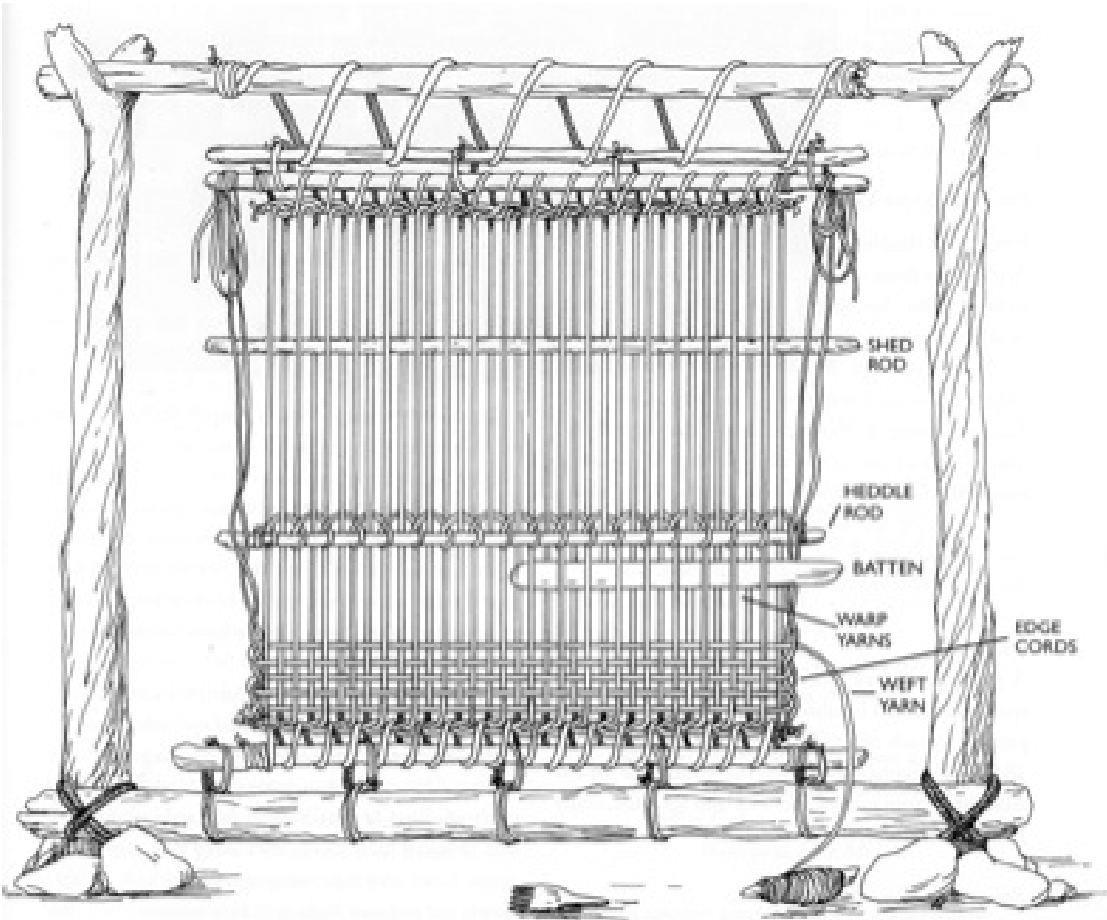


Image Reproduced from: Dockstader, Frederick J. *The Song of the Loom: New Traditions in Navajo Weaving*.

From Sheep to Loom

The Navajo Weaving Process

SHEEP

Churro sheep are the breed most prized by Navajo weavers. They have thick coats of long wool that is very silky and full of luster.

SHEARING

Shearing is usually done in the spring. The wool is thick because it is a winter fleece. The shearer clips all the way around the sheep. The best wool for weaving comes from the area of the shoulders and the sides.

SORTING & CLEANING

After shearing, the wool is sorted. Different types and qualities of fibers are separated for various purposes. Longer parts of the fleece are used for the fine weft yarns. The next step is cleaning. Traditionally, cleaning consisted of shaking and picking of the fleece by hand. Today, the fleece is often sent out to a commercial processor for washing.

CARDING

After the wool is cleaned, it is carded. In this process the wool fibers are combed so that they lie parallel to one another. Carders, consisting of two wooden paddles into which teeth have been set, are used to comb the wool until the proper alignment has been achieved. When the wool is removed from the cards, it is ready for spinning.

SPINNING

The wool is spun with a hand spindle, consisting of a long smooth wooden rod inserted into a circular wooden disk. The wool is drawn out under tension along the length of the rotating spindle. This causes the fibers to become twisted together and fused to form a continuous slender length of yarn.

DYEING

After the wool has been spun into yarn, it is dyed. The yarn is then rinsed to remove excess dye and allowed to dry. Natural dyes are derived from various plants and minerals that are gathered locally. Weavers today may use commercial or natural dyes or various combinations of the two.

WARP & WEFT

Navajo weavers work on a vertical or upright loom. The warp is wound in a figure eight around two horizontal bars. It is important to keep the tension even. The Navajo loom design is extremely efficient and has been essentially the same for centuries.

WEAVING

After these stages of processing are complete, the weaving begins.

Glossary of Terms:

Double Weave: a four-shed setup is used on the verticle loom, creating a design in reverse groups of colors. Essentially, there is one pattern on the front, and the opposite on the back.

Double Pattern: this is generally associated with double saddle blankets, where one half of the blanket has one pattern or design, and the other half has a different pattern or design. When the saddle blanket is folded in half, the user can decided which design to display.

Twill Weave: this type of weave involves floating the horizontal weft over two or more vertical warps. This technique was used to produce thicker, more durable fabric for saddle blankets. It resulted in patterns of diagonal lines and diamond shapes.

Sunday Saddle Blanket: this is an Anglo-American term used to refer to the more decorative saddle blankets that were used on special occasions. They were thrown over the saddle to best display the ornate designs, fringe, and tassels, whereas utilitarian saddle blankets were placed under the saddle.

Double Saddle Blanket: these are generally about twice the size of single saddle blankets and are folded in half and placed under the saddle to provide extra comfort for the horse.

Mohair: hair from an angora goat.

Two-Faced Weave: the weaver essentially creates two completely different patterns on each side of the weaving, usually a complex pattern on the face and a simple design on the reverse.

Saddle Throw: these are meant to add extra padding for the rider, they are placed on top of the saddle rather than beneath it.

This exhibit also includes a Navajo horse bridle, a squash blossom necklace, and a concha belt.

Concha: this term, meaning shells in Spanish, refers to the oval or circular silver brooch-like ornaments that can vary in size.

Naja: this term is an Anglicized form of the Navajo word nazhahi (meaning crescent), a bridle design thought to have come to the Americas through Moorish influences in Spain. The pendants are often used on Squash Blossom necklaces.

Squash Blossom: the Navajo term for the squash blossom bead was Chi Bitan which literally meant "bead which spreads out." The term "squash blossom" is Anglo-American. The design is a variation on a symbol for the pomegranate from Granada, Spain. The pomegranate was a common decorative motif painted on mission churches established by the Spanish in the Americas.

Navajo Saddle Blanket Academic Content Standards:

Ohio Department of Education Visual Art Standards

Kindergarten Visual Arts

2PE Name and point out subject matter and details observed in works of art.

5PE Identify and name materials used in visual art.

6RE Recognize and point out the similarities and differences between artistic styles.

8RE Consider and talk about why people make and enjoy works of art.

Grade One Visual Arts

1PE Recognize and describe that people create art and art objects to communicate ideas and serve different purposes.

2PE Explore and describe how a selected art object was made.

3PE Examine one or more cultural and historical artworks and respond to the visual, expressive features in the work.

Grade Two Visual Arts

4PE Identify and compare the purposes for creating art objects from various cultures.

5PE Identify and describe cultural symbols, image and contexts of works of art.

6RE Identify and articulate important historical and cultural contributions of selected visual artists.

Grade Three Visual Arts

2PE Identify the relationships between and among selected elements and principles of art and design.

3PE Use historical and cultural artworks to answer questions about daily life.

4PE Recognize selected artists who contributed to the cultural heritages of the people of the United States.

Grade Four Visual Arts

3PE Compare and contrast art forms, techniques and functions and artistic styles from a variety of cultures and historical periods.

3RE Recognize and describe the relationship of artworks to their social and cultural contexts.

Grade Five Visual Arts

2PE Identify and communicate how historical and cultural contexts influence ideas that inform artists.

3PE Investigate the role of cultural objects in our everyday environment.

3RE Explain the reasons and value of documenting and preserving works of art and art objects in some cultures.

Grade Six Visual Arts

3PE Compare and contrast visual forms of expression found throughout local regions and in different cultures of the world.

1RE Explain what makes an object a work of art using a range of criteria.

Grade Seven Visual Arts

3PE Identify sources of visual culture in society and the media and discuss how the messages they convey affect personal and consumer choices.

5PE Examine designed objects and identify the processes and decisions made to produce them with attention to purpose, aesthetic, social issues and cultural and personal meaning

5RE Describe how experiences in galleries, museums and other cultural institutions can stimulate the imagination and enrich people's lives.

Grade Eight Visual Arts

4PE Understand how social, cultural and political factors affect what contemporary artists and designers create.

5PE Discover how culture, age, gender and background influence audience perception of art.

Grade Nine Visual Arts

3PE Identify the relationship between community or cultural values and trends in visual arts.

6PE Describe the decisions made in the design of everyday objects.

6RE Identify various venues for viewing works of art.

Grade Ten Visual Arts

1PE Examine the context details of visual imagery and explain the social and cultural influences on the images.

3PE Explore the relationship between community or cultural values and trends in visual art.

5RE Compare and contrast various theories of aesthetic and visual culture.

Grade Eleven Visual Arts

1PE Analyze interdisciplinary connections that influence social and cultural contexts of visual imagery.

2PE Analyze and explain the factors that influence artworks.

Grade Twelve Visual Arts

1PE Interpret social and cultural contexts to develop personal meaning in visual imagery.

Ohio's New Learning Standards:

Kindergarten Social Studies

3. Heritage is reflected through the arts, customs, traditions, family celebrations and language.

Grade One Social Studies

2. Photographs, letters, artifacts and book can be used to learn about the past.

7. Diverse cultural practices address basic human needs in various ways and may change over time.

13. People trade to obtain goods and services they want.

Grade Two Social Studies

6. The work that people do is impacted by the distinctive human and physical characteristics in the place where they live.
9. Interactions among cultures lead to sharing ways of life.

Grade Three Social Studies

5. Daily life is influenced by the agriculture, industry and natural resources in different communities.
7. Systems of transportation and communication move people, product and ideas from place to place.

Grade Four Social Studies

n.a.

Grade Five Social Studies

8. American Indians developed unique cultures with many different ways of life. American Indian tribes and nations can be classified into cultural groups based on geographic and cultural similarities.
9. Political, environmental, social and economic factors cause people, products and ideas to move from place to place in the Western Hemisphere today.
10. The Western Hemisphere is culturally diverse due to American Indian, European, Asian and African influences and interactions, as evidenced by artistic expression, language, religion and food.

Grade Six Social Studies

n.a.

Grade Seven Social Studies

n.a.

Grade Eight Social Studies

2. North America, originally inhabited by American Indians, was explored and colonized by Europeans for economic and religious reasons.
10. Westward expansion contributed to economic and industrial development, debates over sectional issues, war with Mexico and the displacement of American Indians.

High School Social Studies

n.a.

Common Core Standards

Kindergarten Language Arts

- SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or

through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

L.K.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade One Language Arts

SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.1.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

L.1.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Two Language Arts

SL.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.2.2 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

L.2.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Three Language Arts

SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.3.3 Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

L.3.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Four Language Arts

SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.4.3 Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

L.4.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Five Language Arts

SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

L.5.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Six Language Arts

SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

L.6.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Seven Language Arts

SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

L.7.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grade Eight Language Arts

SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

L.8.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grades 9-10 Language Arts

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on other's ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

L.9-10.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Grades 11-12 Language Arts

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on other's ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

L.11-12.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

VISITING THE KENNEDY MUSEUM OF ART

We are looking forward to your Museum visit! It is helpful for visitors to know what to expect when they arrive. The following guidelines will help you understand Museum rules:

Use your senses.

You WILL be using looking and listening skills.

You WILL NOT be using your sense of touch. The oils on our hands can damage works of art, even those made out of stone or bronze.

Talk about what you see in the Museum – but remember:

Be respectful of other visitors in your tone of voice and your language.

Please turn your cell phones off while in the Museum – including teachers and chaperones.

Teachers and chaperones are expected to engage in gallery activities along with their students, and address any disciplinary issues that arise.

Any writing or drawing activities in the galleries should be with pencils.

Backpacks should be left in the front hall.

No food, gum, or drinks are allowed in the galleries.

Photography is allowed in some exhibitions. Please ask Museum staff if you are allowed to take pictures in the gallery.

Photos of student groups may be taken during your visit to the Museum. If students do not have a blanket permission to be photographed, please distribute the following permission slip. Please advise Museum staff if students are not allowed to be photographed.

Permission to Photograph:

I hereby give permission to photograph my child _____ during their visit to the Kennedy Museum of Art. This permission includes (but is not limited to) use in Ohio University publications and web pages as well as local newspapers.

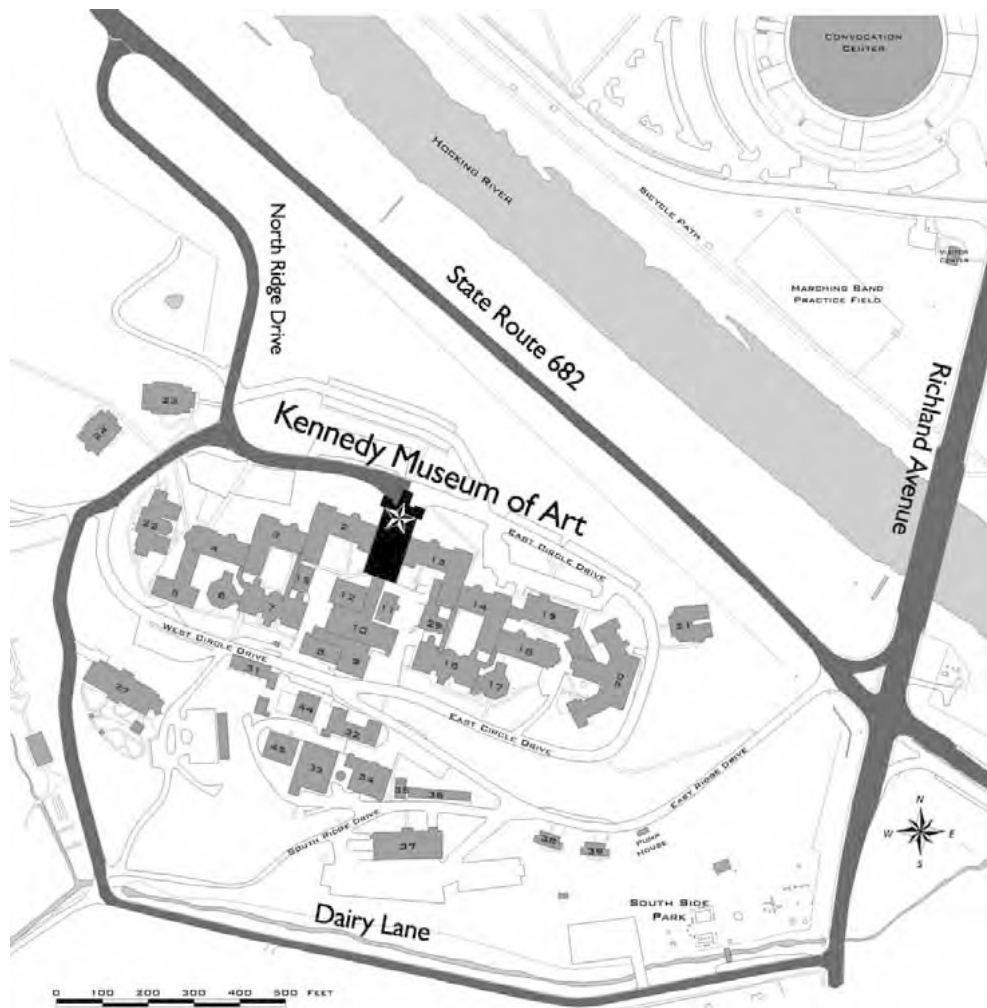
Signed _____ Date _____

GETTING TO THE KENNEDY MUSEUM OF ART

The Kennedy Museum of Art is located in historic Lin Hall at The Ridges on the Ohio University campus. Take State Route 33 to Exit 17 (St. Rte. 682 North-Ohio University exit). Go through the roundabout at Richland Avenue and continue on St. Rte. 682. Turn left on North Ridge Drive, then turn left at yield sign. The Kennedy Museum of Art is on the right. Buses may drop off students under the portico at the museum entrance, then park in the upper or lower parking lots on the left.

PARKING

Chaperones arriving in personal vehicles should park in one of the specifically marked Kennedy Museum of Art Visitor Parking spaces in the parking lot directly across from the Museum, or in a metered spot. (Meters are strictly enforced at all times designated on the meter.) Other parking in the lots is restricted to vehicles with Ohio University "Purple" lot passes and is strictly enforced until 5 p.m. on weekdays.



BUS FUNDS REQUEST FORM

School bus funds up to \$100 per visit to the Kennedy Museum of Art are available through funding from the Friends of the Kennedy Museum of Art on a first-come, first-served basis.

Expenses over \$100 may be requested in special circumstances, but need additional approval.

Schools must make their own transportation arrangements and then mail or fax this completed form to the Kennedy Museum of Art. Payment will be processed upon completion of the visit and received in approximately three weeks.

For further information, please contact Sally Delgado (delgado@ohio.edu) or Lisa Quinn (quinnl@ohio.edu) at 740-593-0953.

Date of visit to Kennedy Museum of Art:

Name of School:

Name of teacher/coordinator:

Grade of students:

Number of students:

Number of buses:

Amount requested (Amounts over \$100 must be pre approved by special process):

Please break down the amount if you know the following:

Cost of bus driver:

Mileage cost:

Name the check should be made out to:

Address the check should be sent to:

Please mail or fax the completed form to: Sally Delgado or Lisa Quinn
Kennedy Museum of Art
Lin Hall, Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701
Fax: 740-593-1305

(KMA)

Received on _____ Processed _____