

Eight Shorts for Museums and Classrooms

A swift instructive look at the artist demonstrating his process, and discussing his theories. Eight short, pointed sequences are designed for use in classrooms and museums either as stand-alone shorts, or as a 29-minute film. "Anatsui at Work" was shot on three continents over two years with "Fold Crumple Crush" with little duplication aside from condensed sequences of the studio work. The eight shorts explore specific media and follow Anatsui creating art in Nsukka and installing one of his most ambitious works on the façade of the Palazzo Fortuny Museum in Venice. The sections are:

Materials – From the Environment. In Nsukka, Nigeria, we hear Anatsui talk about his relationship to materials and his use of "things that have been used before." The camera follows the artist to a teeming Nigerian recycling market, then to the modest distillery where he buys liquor bottle-tops, and to the rural yard where he found old mortars. Two of his Nsukka University colleagues enlarge upon Anatsui's philosophy.

4:54

Pottery – Tradition and Modernity. Handling three of his seminal "Broken Pots," and showing them to the camera, the artist describes his technique and talks about pottery as a metaphor for life.

2:43

Wood – The Non-fixed Form. Anatsui walks through a Nigerian lumber market and talks about his work with chainsaw and wood. His wood wall reliefs are deliberately composed of separate boards that are not joined together. Back in the studio, while deftly rearranging the boards of a wall piece, he says his hope is to bring out creativity in others. Gazing at the wall piece he has radically transformed, Anatsui admits that most people don't have the courage to do this.

3:55

Outdoor Sculpture – University of Nigeria Nsukka. On the campus Anatsui walks around two monuments he created around 1980 which expressed his thoughts about the benefits—and risks—of science.

1:48

Tin Can Lids – Shaping and Reshaping. Taking a single sheet of lids from his "Peak Project" sculpture, Anatsui twists and props it up this way and that till it takes a "Fairly OK" form. He explains that there is no permanent form.

3:26

The Studio Process – Many Hands. Inside the Nsukka studio, assistants explain how they are organized, and how they make the labor intensive "blocks" with which Anatsui constructs his hangings. They demonstrate and name many of the different treatments that Anatsui has invented to create rich and varied textures.

4:42

Composing – Shifting and Arranging. Working on the studio floor we watch the culmination of the creative process. Anatsui orchestrates a dozen assistants and scores of “blocks” out compose what will become a huge hanging.

3:52

The Nomadic Aesthetic – Freedom to Move [Palazzo Fortuny]. In Venice we watch Anatsui shifting and changing the vast bottle-top sculpture he has draped over the entire facade of the Palazzo Fortuny Museum. He explains how his thinking takes shape in his art and ruminates about the connection between his philosophy of art and his life. Shot in Venice and Skowhegan, Maine.

3:33