Look closely at Alan Lau’s Crows and Persimmons.
Tip: Use a viewfinder from a piece of paper, like in the photo on the left, to help explore all sections of this artwork!

Discuss with a partner:
What do you see? Are there certain shapes, patterns or marks that stand out to you? What looks familiar or recognizable to you? How would you describe the different ways the artist applied ink and art materials onto the paper?

Reflect:
What connections can you draw from the title of this artwork and what you have explored? What do you think inspired the artist to create this artwork?

Alan Lau, Crows and Persimmons (for Mu Chil Fa-Ch’ang and Frank Okada)
circa 2008, sumi and mixed media on paper, 53 ½ in × 54 1/2 in, Gift of Colonel John and Mrs. Mary Young by exchange, 2015.17.02

Photo courtesy of TAM Educator Vanessa Harriss
Lau’s marks are expressive and dynamic. He often weaves in watery layers of ink and pastels to create these abstract artworks. Alan Lau was greatly influenced by the Asian modernism of the Northwest School when he moved to Seattle. He is also a poet, journalist, and key figure in the Seattle Asian American cultural scene.

Exploring Mark Making

Artists sometimes use a variety of tools to create their art like sticks, drinking straws, and other objects from their homes. Each tool has the potential to make different kinds of marks!

1. First, take your brush and dip it in some water.

2. Dip your brush into watercolor or ink. Then make a few shapes on your paper. What shapes stand out to you in your artwork?

3. Try different tools that you have around the house and repeat steps 1 & 2. For example, if you use a straw, you can put some watercolor paint on the end and slowly blow air through the opposite end onto the paper to see what happens.

4. Try another tool like a stick. Dip it into your watercolor or ink. Then draw with each end to see what kinds of different lines you can make. See how many tools and how many different marks you can make!

Suggested materials:
- ink, watercolor, or food coloring
- paintbrush
- paper
- straw
- water cup
- stick

use whatever you have at home!