

LESSON 2

Composing With Found Objects

GRADES 1-12

OVERVIEW

The act of collecting not only includes exploring, searching and acquiring, but also organizing and displaying. A group of objects displayed together often has an intriguing visual impact. And depending on how we choose to display them, the objects can transform themselves.

Hannah's collection of assembled and manipulated objects reveals her decisions about how those objects are to be viewed as a group. When viewing Hannah's objects from a distance on a flat wall, do we see them as patterns, shapes and forms of line-making instead of just objects?

In this lesson, participants will look at how different arrangements can transform objects into something unexpected.





1

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

Compose work that incorporates two- and three-dimensional elements

Explore how perspective and orientation can alter how an object is perceived or viewed

Use photography to capture a composition

MATERIALS (image 1)

Camera

Colour printer

Card stock (8.5" x 11" or larger)

Large white or black poster paper

Found natural and manufactured objects

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One

Collect various natural and manufactured objects. You'll be composing within a large piece of poster paper, so choose enough objects to create a proportionate composition but make sure they won't exceed the limits of the paper. Objects used during this project will remain unaltered and can be returned after use.

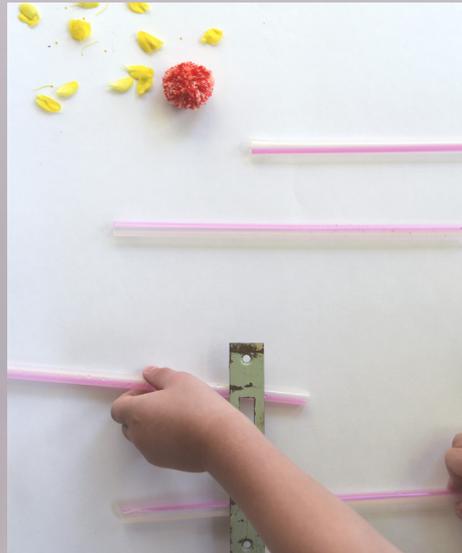
Step Two

Choose your background paper based on what will nicely contrast your found objects. If you have mostly lighter-coloured items, go with the black background. Alternatively, if you have mostly darker-coloured objects, use the white paper.

Step Three (image 2)

On top of your background paper, arrange your found objects. Be sure to leave a three-inch border all the way around your background paper, in case your photograph needs to be cropped later on.

Your final composition will be documented from a bird's-eye view, so it will be important while arranging to keep checking your work from this perspective. You should be able to do this by safely standing on a chair, or you can work on the ground so the bird's-eye-view can be seen from a standing position.



2

Play around with each object. If it's rotated on its side or gets stacked on top of another object, does it become less recognizable? Do you have several objects that are similar in shape and can be used to create a pattern? If you squint while looking at an object, can you identify it as a general shape? What about if you step across the room to view it? Can you see something you didn't before? Are any of your objects creating interesting shadows on the paper?

Continue arranging until you are pleased with your composition.



3



4

Step Four (image 3 and 4)

Photograph your composition from a bird's-eye view. Take note of any overhead lighting and position yourself over your composition so that your body doesn't cast a visible shadow over it. Then position your camera squarely above your composition and make sure it's level with the paper before capturing the photograph. View your photograph after capturing it to make sure everything was lined up correctly. Try to fill most of the frame with your composition and background paper.

Step Five

View your photograph on a computer and crop it if needed. You should see only your composition and background paper. Adjust brightness and contrast as needed. Print your final photograph with a colour printer on the card stock.

Variations

Younger participants can arrange the objects more freely and the work can be photographed for them.

Older participants can be encouraged to use critical-thinking skills when making decisions about object placement.