



CREATE AN ASSEMBLAGE

Grades: 3 - 4

Visual Arts lesson: James Castle Assemblage

Time required: 3 hours

Featured Exhibit

James Castle: From Icehouse Unto Early Attic

Featured Artworks & Visual Resources

Visual Sample 1, page 5

Portraits of the artist, James Castle

Visual Sample 2, page 5

Turkey, Madeline Paper Doll and Pitcher by James Castle

Visual Sample 3, page 6

Stars, Coffee and Envelope by James Castle

Visual Sample 4, page 7

Works by Gerald Cambon and Marion Martinez

Visual Sample 5, page 9

Balance diagram

Lesson Overview

Students will learn about self-taught artist James Castle. Students will view examples of Castles work and works by other contemporary outsider arts. Students will create an assemblage using found materials.

Lesson Objectives

Students should be able to:

- ▶ view and discuss visual samples from featured exhibit.
- ▶ identify and discuss composition, symmetrical balance, asymmetrical balance, and radial balance and use them in their works of art.
- ▶ identify the meaning of a self-taught or outsider artist.
- ▶ identify the meaning of “assemblage” as an art form.
- ▶ discuss the importance of recycling materials and how artists (including themselves) use recycling in their own artwork and lives.
- ▶ use newly acquired skills to create original artwork.



4th grade student creates assemblage using found materials

Supplies

- ▶ Cardboard, railroad board or mat board
- ▶ Craft glue
- ▶ 8in. x 11in. newsprint, three pieces per student
- ▶ Sharpie marker
- ▶ Assorted found paper-wrapping paper, old books or magazine pages, playing cards, old calendar pages, phone book pages
- ▶ Assorted found objects: screws, washer nuts and bolts; dominoes, dice or other pieces from discarded games; string and wire

Vocabulary

Assemblage: a form or sculpture in which an artist uses found materials in a purposeful arrangement. The objects that can be used are limitless and are determined by the artist who selects them.

Found material: every day objects including items like wood, paper and metal that were not originally intended for use in the creation of artwork, but have an appealing aesthetic quality.

Self-taught or outsider artist: artists who work outside of mainstream society who did not receive traditional arts education. This can include folk artists, child artists and imprisoned artists.

Composition: the plan, placement or arrangement of the elements of art in a work.

Visual Balance: the way the elements of art are arranged to create a feeling of stability in a work of art. Just like a scale, a work of art has shapes and colors that are arranged evenly and in a way that doesn't look lopsided; it is instead visually pleasing to the eye and is balanced.

Symmetrical balance: shapes and colors are arranged exactly the same way on each half of a page. If you were to fold the paper and cut it in half, each side would be exactly the same... much like a reflection in a mirror.

Asymmetrical balance: shapes and colors are arranged off center and unevenly, but still create an interesting composition. Balance can be achieved by using a few smaller elements to offset one larger element. If you were to cut the paper in half, each side would be different.

Radial Balance: Shapes swirl from and around the center of the page in a circular path.

View and Discuss

James Castle, 1900 – 1977, was born in Garden Valley, Idaho, a rural area in the mountains near Boise. Castle was a self-taught artist who created drawings, assemblage and books throughout his lifetime. Castle was deaf. He was sent to the school for the deaf and blind at age eight for a short time, but is believed to have never learned to read and write. Castle created his artworks from found materials such as papers salvaged from common packaging and mail, in addition to food containers of all types. Castle used soot from the woodstove to draw with, and the ink from cheap paper to add color to his art.

View the examples of Castle's artwork. Can you identify found materials? Next view visual samples of assemblages by other outsider artists. Compare and contrast the artworks. How are they similar? How are they different?

Use the overhead diagram to view and discuss the three basic types of visual balance--symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial. Now look at the outsider artist's work again. What kind of compositions did they create?

Create an Assemblage

Warm Up

Pass out three sheets of 8-in. x 11-in. newsprint to each student. Ask students to draw the three basic types of balance. On the first sheet on newsprint, have the student use the Sharpie to draw simple shapes, demonstrating symmetrical balance. Next, on a fresh sheet of newsprint, have student repeat the process drawing an asymmetrical design. On the third sheet, have student draw a design with radial balance.

Process

Assemble a composition. Distribute cardboard and an assortment of found materials to each student. Give students time to experiment with arranging the materials into a meaningful composition. Ask students to work to achieve one of the three basic types of balance illustrated on their pieces of cardboard. Demonstrate that students can layer larger and smaller items, thicker with thinner items, as previously viewed on the visual examples.

Distribute craft glue and allow students to attach their assemblages to the cardboard. Set aside compositions to dry. Clean up.

Wrap Up

During the remaining 5-10 minutes, have the students walk around the room and look at their classmates' designs. Give students about 2-3 minutes to explore, and then have them be seated. Have each student give one reason why he/she likes someone else's assemblage. Answers should be more specific than "I like it." Explain why the assemblage is interesting. Ask the students to identify the different types of balance discussed earlier. What is symmetrical balance? Asymmetrical balance? Radial balance? Composition?

Evaluate

- Objective 1: Did the student create a composition that displayed symmetrical balance, asymmetrical balance or radial balance?
- Objective 2: Did the student create a balanced composition?
What type of balance does their artwork demonstrate?
- Objective 3: Was the student able to explain found material and their use by outsider artist?
Was the student able to define an assemblage?

Follow-up Activity

Post-visit discussion: Making Art with Found Materials

- ▶ Discuss how found materials from 21st century homes differ from those available to Castle.
- ▶ Ask each student to choose one of the Castle images as a model and make their own artwork.
- ▶ Invite students to talk about their pieces and why they selected the particular Castle artwork as their model.
- ▶ Discuss how these artworks function as design objects and how they might reflect each maker's life and experience.
- ▶ Reconsider "About James Castle" and discuss how his life, rural environment, his deafness, and lack of formal education might be reflected in his art.

Standards Addressed

Idaho Humanities Performance Standards – Visual Arts

Standard 1:

Historical and Cultural Context, Goal 1.1: Discuss the historical and cultural contexts of the visual arts.

Objective: 1,2, 3

Standard 2:

Critical Thinking, Goal 2.1: Conduct analysis in the visual arts.

Objectives 2, 3, 5

Critical Thinking, Goal 2.2: Engage in reasoned dialogue and make informed decisions about the visual arts.

Objectives 2, 3, 5

Standard 3:

Performance, Goal 3.1: Demonstrate skills essential to the visual arts.

Objective 1,2, 3, 4

Performance, Goal 3.2: Communicate through the visual arts, applying artistic concepts, knowledge, and skills.

Objective 2

Visual Sample 1

James Castle Portrait, Age 11

James Castle Portrait, 1950



Visual Sample 2

Works by James Castle



Turkey
James Castle
Assemblage, cardboard and string



Madeleine Paper Doll
James Castle
Assemblage, cardboard and string



Pitcher
James Castle
Assemblage, cardboard and string

Visual Sample 3

Works by James Castle



Stars
James Castle
Found paper collage



Coffee
James Castle
Found paper collage



Envelope
James Castle
Found paper and ink

Visual Sample 4

Works by Gerald Cambon and Marion Martinez



Simonize II, 2008
Gerald Chambon
Mixed media assemblage

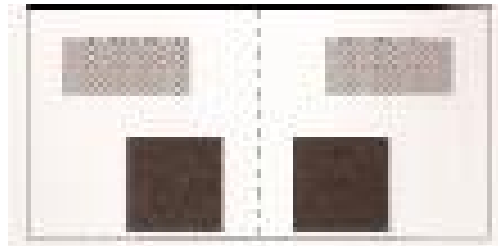


Les Pensionnaires IV, 2008
Gerald Chambon
Mixed media assemblage

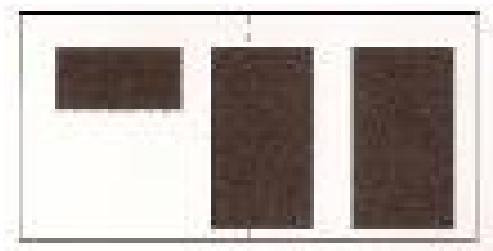


Sorrowful Mother, 2006
Marion Martinez
Mixed media assemblage,
found computer parts

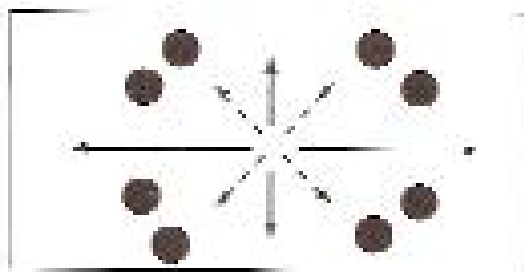
Visual Sample 5
Balance Diagram



SYMMETRICAL BALANCE



ASYMMETRICAL BALANCE



RADIAL BALANCE