

Assemblage Art made from “throwaways”

Art has been created from cast-off materials since art has been in existence. Certain artists are drawn to making something out of what would generally be considered nothing — taking what most people would view as useless and arranging it in an artistic manner, or placing it with traditional materials or in a particular setting that elevates it from junk to art.

Art created in this manner is often referred to as “assemblage” and endless varieties of it exist. It can be very sculptural, as seen in the recycled automobile parts assembled by John Angus Chamberlain. It can resemble a stage set, as demonstrated in Ed Kienholz’s large-scale installations. Or it can be confined to a plane or box, such as the assemblages of Joseph Cornell.

In this particular lesson plan, students will look closely at the work of Louise Nevelson, known for her abstract sculptures made from cast-off pieces of wood — actual street “throwaways” — uniformly coated with black or white spray paint. Students will create their own assemblages from wood pieces and other cast-off objects on a panel.

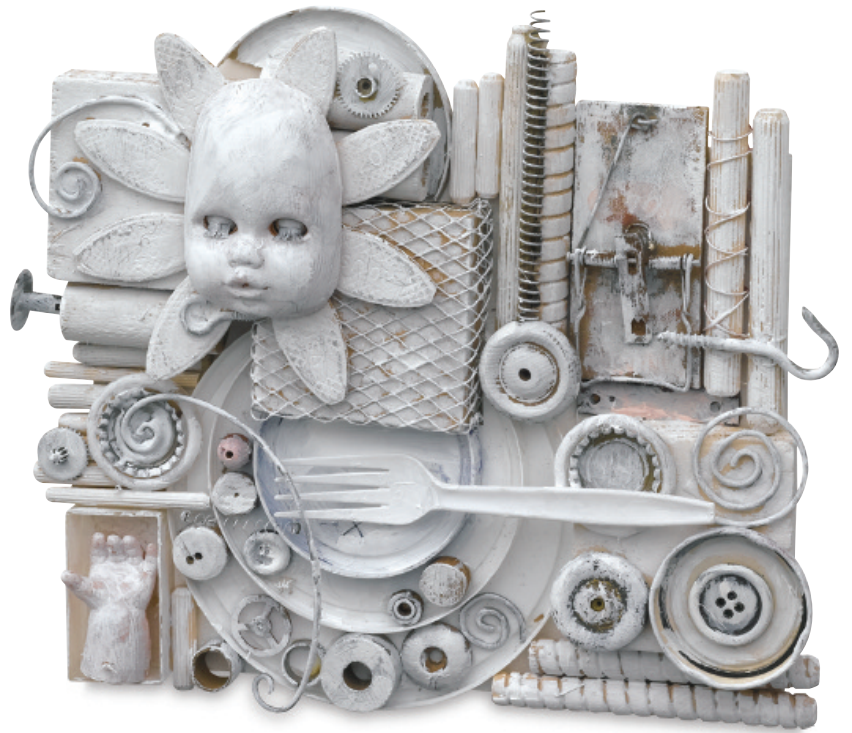
Nevelson is credited with saying “I think all great innovations are built on rejections.”

Grade Levels 5-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View images of recycled art and assemblage. Include images from Web search for Louise Nevelson images. Recommended resources:
Recycled Art Prints from Crystal Art (68628-1009)



Materials

[Blick® Economy Canvas Panels](#), 8" x 10", classroom package of 24 (07015-1012)

Wood pieces, use scrap or any of the following:

[Treasure Chest of Wood](#), 10-lb assortment (60919-0000)

[Creativity Street® Wood Shapes](#), 1000 piece assortment (60453-1000)

[Craftsticks](#), box of 1000 (60401-1001)

[Economy Wood Project Bag](#), 72 cu inch (60416-8480)

Cast-off objects, such as buttons, machine parts, wire, toy parts, recycled plastic pieces, old jewelry, foamboard or heavy cardboard scraps, small boxes, lids and so on.

[Aleene's "Tacky" Glue](#), 8-oz (23826-1005); share four across classroom

[Blick® Artist's Acrylic Gesso](#), quart (00623-1027); share across classroom

[Foam Brush](#), 1" (05114-1001); one per student

OPTIONAL

[Krylon® Spray Paint](#), Satin Black (01405-2096); share two 12-oz cans across classroom

Preparation, continued

2. Collect wood scraps and found objects, then place them in individual trays or boxes according to type. Label the boxes according to how many pieces each student is allowed to select from that box. Inexpensive and plentiful items such as buttons or craft sticks may be labeled “take as many as needed,” while other boxes may be labeled “take one” or “take up to five,” depending on the quantity or cost of the objects.

Process

1. Distribute one panel to each student. Invite students to select objects for their assemblages from the boxes.
2. Give students time to arrange their objects before distributing the glue. Encourage students to discover ways to layer the objects, create patterns and incorporate a variety of textures.
3. Glue objects in place and allow time to dry. It may be helpful to have paper clips, clothes pins or something heavy to hold objects in place while the glue dries.
4. To create a unified piece of art, use a foam brush to coat the finished assemblage with acrylic gesso. Gesso is very white, opaque and adheres well to most surfaces.

Options:

1. After gesso is dry, assemblages may be spray-painted black or another color. Read the label carefully and follow all precautions when using any spray paint.

National Standards

Content Standard #2 – Using knowledge of structures and functions

5-8 Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas

9-12 Students create multiple solutions to specific visual arts problems that demonstrate competence in producing effective relationships between structural choices and artistic functions

Content Standard #4 – Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

5-8 Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

9-12 Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making

Content Standard #4 – Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

5-8 Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry

9-12 Students identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works