

# Tim Burton: The Artist's Process



Installation view of exhibition entrance *Tim Burton*, May 29–October 31, 2011, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

**T**IM BURTON WAS BORN IN BURBANK, CALIFORNIA, in 1958 and attended Burbank High School. After studying at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), he worked as an animator at the Walt Disney Studios before breaking out on his own. Taking inspiration from popular culture, fairy tales, and gothic traditions, Burton has reinvented Hollywood genre filmmaking as an expression of a personal vision.

The *Tim Burton* exhibition explores the full range of Burton's creative work as a film director, artist, illustrator, photographer, and writer.

The major retrospective highlights the artist's rich imagination, lifelong dedication to drawing, lineage of horror and humor, and commitment to collaboration. It brings together more than 700 drawings, paintings, photographs, moving-image works, storyboards, puppets, concept artworks, maquettes, costumes, and cinematic ephemera, including art from a number of unrealized and little-known personal projects. Organized chronologically, the exhibition features three sections: *Surviving Burbank*, *Beautifying Burbank*, and *Beyond Burbank*.

While only a portion of the works on view can be featured in this curriculum, these materials highlight key concepts in the artist's body of work as well as address the larger implications of what it means to be an artist today.

- In what ways is Burton's process similar to or different from other contemporary artists? How does Burton use sketching as a tool to cultivate creativity? How does sketching translate into other disciplines? How can we integrate this idea of process into our own classroom practices? And, how can we, like Burton, work collaboratively to produce imaginative work?

## **SURVIVING BURBANK (1958–1976)**

"When I was growing up in Burbank, the environment was very middle-class suburban, And I felt like an alien," says Tim Burton.<sup>1</sup> He survived this feeling of alienation on the strength of his imagination. He consoled himself with the pleasures of drawing and humor and an interest in visual media that he indulged through colorful forms of popular entertainment: newspaper comics, advertising, greeting cards, children's literature, toys, animated cartoons, monster movies, science fiction films, carnival sideshows, performance art, and holiday rituals, including the art of the Mexican Day of the Dead. Burton was heavily influenced by popular culture and has used his childhood in Burbank as a resource for the subjects and themes that he has explored in feature films, shorts, and commercials since 1982.

From childhood to the present, Burton has expressed himself through drawing. At a young age, he had a teacher who didn't force him to draw a certain way, but rather encouraged students to draw in their own style and approach drawing as a means to explore their fantasy life and emotional core. Burton says, "I was not a very verbal communicator growing up, so it was a form of communication for me."<sup>2</sup> For Burton, sketching is an activity concurrent with seeing and thinking — the conduit of imagination and an important part of his thought process. His notes and sketches are a way to think through ideas or projects.

- How is sketching similar to the writing process of drafting and editing? How can we encourage our students to use the tools of artists — sketching, revising, editing — as a means to think through concepts, develop and refine ideas?

## **BEAUTIFYING BURBANK (1977–1984)**

Burton's talent matured during two years of study at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and four years working as an animator at the Walt Disney Company. A number of his signature motifs and stylistic traits emerged during this period, such as his creature-based characters, his use of masks and body modification, and his exploration of the relationship between childhood and adulthood.

Many of Burton's recurring themes stem from childhood and adolescence and combine a unique mix of horror and humor. The vast majority of the hundreds of artworks in the exhibition are drawings, from sketches and doodles to cartoons and character studies. Even in the earliest of these, Burton's key themes and storylines are evident: creatures transforming from one thing into another, quirky children attempting to make sense of equally odd adults, skeletons mingling with humans.

Many of the great printmakers in art history have also explored these same motifs. Long before film emerged as the leading mass-culture medium, printmaking was a primary and democratic means of disseminating ideas widely. Burton's emphasis on exaggeration, distortion, and fantasy parallel the work of many artists throughout history, particularly that of the German Expressionists.

- View the enclosed CD to see an idiosyncratic array of graphic works chosen by Tim Burton in consultation with the museum's curatorial staff. Compare and contrast these with works by Burton and with his completed films.

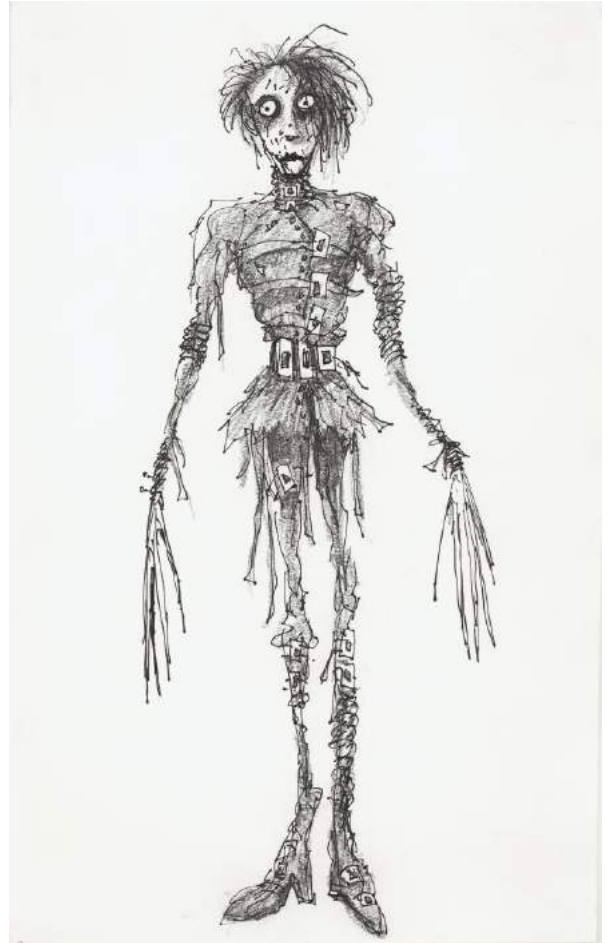
## BEYOND BURBANK (1985- )

Burton's career blossomed through his work in feature films. *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985), *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Batman* (1989), and *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) made him a brand name before his sixth feature, *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), was released. In this phase of his creative life, rewarding professional collaborations helped bring his personal vision to the screen. Burton often works with the same creative team. Frequent collaborators include film composer Danny Elfman, costume designer Colleen Atwood, animation character creators McKinnon and Saunders and production designer Bo Welch, among others.

- Think of a project where you worked well with others. What role did you play in the team and what role did others take? How did the different roles interact with each other? What made the project a success? How can you adapt this participatory model for youth and for use in the classroom?

## CHILDHOOD ALIENATION AND IMAGINATIVE ESCAPE

Burton's early experiences shaped his characters and narratives, which often represent the well-meaning "outsider," the misunderstood, the lonely, and the rejected — all reflections of his childhood experiences. "Those feelings never really leave you," says Burton, "It's just part of your DNA. I always felt like Frankenstein and my neighbors were all the angry villagers."<sup>3</sup> To combat the alienation and loneliness that he felt as a child, Burton found joy and solace at the Cornell Theater in Burbank, where he watched old monster movies starring Vincent Price and Christopher Lee. He also occupied his time by watching TV, drawing, and playing in the local cemetery.



Tim Burton (United States, b. 1958), *Untitled (Edward Scissorhands)*, 1990, pen and ink, and pencil on paper, 14¼ x 9 in., Private collection, Edward Scissorhands © Twentieth Century Fox, © 2011 Tim Burton

Burton's misfit character is fully embodied in Edward Scissorhands, the lead character in the 1990 film of the same name. Like his other early films, notably *Beetlejuice* and *Batman*, *Edward Scissorhands* is a "dark story of conflict between good and evil emerging from a swamp of adolescent suburban conformity."<sup>4</sup> Scissorhands (see the pen and ink drawing above) personifies the themes that recur and reverberate throughout much of the artist's works: the isolation of feeling disconnected from the world at large and the search for true identity.



Tim Burton (United States, b. 1958), *Untitled (The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories)*, 1998, pen and ink and watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 in., Private collection, © 2011 Tim Burton

- Storyboard it! – Consider your own life and how your experiences have defined your character. If you were to write a story about yourself, what are the important memories or events that you would include? Why? Make a list of some ideas. Create a visual autobiography using a storyboard, a template or guide that comic book artists and others use for brainstorming. Divide your story into four parts and sketch four different drawings accompanied by written captions. What are the beginning, middle, and end? How will you transition from one scene to the next? Finally, add color to bring the story to life.

Like Edward Scissorhands, Stain Boy, a biohazard superhero, was initially conceived and inspired from a sketch drawn by the artist. Burton first

introduced Stain Boy in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories* (1997), a book combining the artist's drawings and prose. Even in these short stories, the enduring motif of the outsider and the misunderstood are present. In 2000, Stain Boy became the subject of a six-part online animation series (view it at [www.timburtoncollective.com/multimedia.html](http://www.timburtoncollective.com/multimedia.html).) In each episode, Stain Boy works for the Burbank police to investigate and apprehend "social outcasts," characters who exist in the other poems and stories of Burton's book. *Robot Boy*, an animatronic sculpture designed especially for the 2009 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and fabricated at California State University Fullerton, is also based on a character in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories*.



Tim Burton (United States, b. 1958), *Robot Boy*, 2009, Steel, cast aluminum, LEDs, Arduino programmers, blown glass, copper wire, rubber, electric motor, and paint, 68 x 36 x 30 in., Private collection, © 2011 Tim Burton, Photo by Tom Mikawa

- Look for the Shapes – Burton repeats certain shapes and symbols to communicate his character’s emotions. For example, the faces of his troubled heroes and heroines are often geometric shapes. The eyes, faces, and bodies of many characters are composed of circular or organic shapes. Burton often uses circles to suggest unhappiness. Do *Stain Boy* and *Robot Boy* seem round and sad? Describe their features. Create your own characters using only geometric or organic shapes to create different moods or personalities.

Scissorhands, *Stain Boy*, and *Robot Boy*, like many of Burton’s characters, force viewers to consider how people deal with difference in society. Do you learn to accept it? Embrace it?

Burton’s message in much of his work is: stay true to yourself. His characters do this through creativity. Unfailingly, his heroes/protagonists use their imagination and/or imaginative activity as a response to feelings of disconnection and isolation.

- Creative Solutions – Think of a time when you felt different or at odds with friends, family members, or at school. What contributed to the way you felt? How do you think others perceived the situation? How did you or could you creatively resolve the problem? How would you solve the problem differently today?

## HORROR AND HUMOR

Burton believes there is a fundamental link between horror and humor, born from his fascination with monster movies. “Ever since I was three years old, I can remember I loved monster movies and dark, expressionist kinds of things. Being a fairly quiet sort of nonverbal child, you look inward to explore your feelings and communicate through drawings.”<sup>5</sup> While growing up in Burbank, movies – not museums – were his preferred source of visual culture. Nonetheless, through his love of drawing and his preferred motifs, he finds common ground with artists from many other times and places. In his allegiance to draftsmanship, Burton is part of a distinguished tradition. Since the early Renaissance, drawings have been considered to be especially revealing of the artist’s individual genius and style. Prints, by extension, can distill the hand-drawn line to its essence and reproduce it for mass distribution.



Odilon Redon (France, 1840–1916), *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts toward Infinity)*, 1882, lithograph, 17¼ x 12¼ in., Wallis Foundation Fund in memory of Hal B. Wallis, AC1997.14.1.1 Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

- Wit and Words – Look carefully at the etching (a type of print) made by Spanish painter and print-maker Francisco de Goya on the following page. What do you see? Make a list of all of the details that capture your attention. What do you think might be happening? In this self-portrait, Goya imagines himself asleep amid his drawing tools with owls, bats, and other creatures surrounding him. This work, satirically titled *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (written in French in the lower left), is part of a series of etchings published by Goya. What do you think this phrase might mean? Does knowing the title change or alter your impression? What artistic choices did Goya make to create a dreamlike atmosphere? Does the interplay of words and image add to the sense of horror and humor? If you could retitling the etching, what would you name it?

Certain periods of art history resonate especially strongly with Burton’s vision. Mannerist artists of the mid-sixteenth century reacted against the tradition and orderly grace of the Renaissance with exaggerated, stylized figural concoctions. At the turn of the twentieth century, Symbolists created hallucinatory worlds filled with outsized eyeballs and insects. (See Odilon Redon’s print at left.) Japanese art has traditionally featured ghosts and demons to represent irrationality, while in Mexican culture the skeleton has both spiritual and political significance.

- Macabre & Mood – Discuss the mood suggested in French artist Odilon Redon’s lithograph (a type of print). Consider the artist’s use of such elements as line, shape, color, or value (a color’s lightness or darkness). Redon was known for transforming the natural world into dark visions and strange fantasies. Throughout his life, poetry and prose exerted a powerful influence on his imagination and functioned as inspiration for a number of paintings, drawings, and prints. This print was inspired by writer Edgar Allan Poe’s tales of mystery and the macabre. Read a poem by Poe and compare and contrast how Burton and Redon use artistic devices to create a mood. Illustrate a poem of your choice, visually capturing its theme and mood.



Francisco de Goya (Spain, 1746–1828), *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1799, etching and aquatint, 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in., Paul Rodman Mabury Trust Fund, 63.11.43. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA



Set photographs from the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919, gelatin silver prints, 9<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.1a–b. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

Above all, German Expressionism, which originated around 1905 and was flourishing by the early 1910s, brought intuition and anxiety to the fore. The stark, powerful prints of the Expressionist era seem to presage the haunted interiors and emotive creatures found in Burton's feature films. Nowhere is this more evident than in the 1919 film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, which illustrates the movement of artistic motifs across media. This story about madmen and murder, directed by Robert Wiene,

is notable for its distorted reality (see the set photographs above). The two lead actors, Conradt Veidt and Werner Krauss, inhabit a jagged landscape of sharp angles; the tilted walls and windows seem to be closing in on them. There is a strong emphasis on light and dark, of being in a dreamscape or in an alternate reality. The sets were directly painted on flat canvas by artists Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig.





Installation view of *Carousel*, 2009, Tim Burton, May 29–October 31, 2011, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, © 2011 Tim Burton, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

## ARTISTIC COLLABORATION

Like many contemporary artists, Burton works with a team to realize his projects and bring his personal vision to the screen. Together with artists, film composers, costume and production designers, animation character creators, and actors, Burton has established a recognizable style and aesthetic that is revered today by an international audience. Burton says, “Every time I do anything, I start with the character.”<sup>6</sup> Burton communicates his characters and vision to his team through sketches rather than extensive storyboarding.

The *Carousel* installation in the *Tim Burton* exhibition is an example of this type of artistic collaboration. The *Carousel* is based on a pastel drawing on black paper that Burton completed as part of an alien series in 1983. (The drawing is included in the exhibition.) Twenty-six years

later, what began as a sketch became a three-dimensional sculpture, and finally, an immersive environment. Multiple artists contributed their expertise to create a multisensory work composed of layers of creatures. The four-by-six-foot revolving, multimedia, black-light installation hangs from the ceiling and is composed of thirteen hand-carved figures that are suspended from a circus tent structure. Below this structure, a sixteen-inch plasma ball is hung upside down. Longtime collaborator and sculptor Albert Cuellar created the *Carousel* for the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. For LACMA, the installation was expanded to include hand-painted wallpaper. The fluorescent purple and white creatures on the walls mimic the shapes of the characters on the carousel. Calliope music composed by Danny Elfman adds to the surreal effect.



Installation view, *Tim Burton*, May 29–October 31, 2011, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

- 2D to 3D—Using paper, mixed media collage, wire, recycled materials, or modeling clay, transform one of your two-dimensional drawings into a three-dimensional sculpture. Consider how you will make the transition from a flat representation to an actual object of scale. Will you break the drawing into parts or focus on the form of the sculpture as a whole? How will the structure stand and support its own weight? Will you need to enlist the help or expertise of others to realize your vision? What other factors might you need to consider?

Burton is driven to create, and likes to make things. He is an incessant sketcher, drawer, and doodler, as the exhibition so amply illustrates. What is unique about this exhibition is the emphasis on the process over the product. Burton has said that he never considered this body of work as art or artwork; it was not really meant to be seen, but rather was simply part of the process when thinking of ideas or working on projects.

How does focusing on the process allow us, as viewers, to see Burton's work in entirely new and different ways? Does it make you consider your own working style?

Burton's work and the exhibition also demonstrate a blurring of boundaries between fine art and popular culture, transcending the traditional categories of film, drawing, photography, sculpture, and writing. In thinking about those blurred lines, what does it mean for a fine art museum, such as LACMA, to host a pop culture exhibition? And does this change or challenge your definition of art? How so?

- Curate your Own Exhibition—Gather your sketches, writing samples, sculptures, photographs, or videos and design an exhibition or catalogue. What criteria will you establish to determine what is included and what is not? How might you group or categorize your artwork? How will the installation of your exhibition reflect this organization?



Installation view of *Air Dancers*, 2011, Tim Burton, May 29–October 31, 2011, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, © 2011 Tim Burton, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Los Angeles Magazine*, May 2011

<sup>2</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 2011

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Los Angeles Magazine*, May 2011

<sup>6</sup> In Salisbury, Mark (ed.) *Burton on Burton*, Faber and Faber, London, 2006. p. 16

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Evenings for Educators is presented by **CHASE**

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# *Burton Selects*

FROM LACMA'S COLLECTION



LACMA | EVENINGS FOR EDUCATORS | OCTOBER 4, 2011

## HORROR AND HUMOR

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**F**ROM CHILDHOOD TO THE PRESENT DAY, Tim Burton has expressed himself through drawing. For him, sketching is an activity concurrent with seeing and thinking—the conduit of imagination. In his allegiance to draftsmanship, Burton is part of a distinguished tradition. Since the early Renaissance, drawings have been considered to be especially revealing of the artist’s individual genius and style. Prints, by extension, can distill the hand-drawn line to its essence and reproduce it for mass distribution. Long before film emerged as the leading mass-culture medium, printmaking was a primary means of disseminating ideas widely and democratically.

Certain periods of art history have especially strong resonance with Burton’s vision. For example, Mannerist artists of the mid-sixteenth century reacted against the tradition and orderly grace of the Renaissance with exaggerated, stylized figural concoctions. At the turn of the twentieth century, Symbolists created hallucinatory worlds filled with out-sized eyeballs and insects.

Japanese art has traditionally featured ghosts and demons to represent irrationality, while in Mexican culture the skeleton has both spiritual and political significance. Above all, German Expressionism, which flourished in the 1920s and 30s, brought intuition and anxiety to the fore. The stark, powerful prints of the Expressionist era seem to presage the haunted interiors and emotive creatures found in Burton’s feature films.

While Burton was growing up in Burbank, movies—not museums—were his preferred source of visual culture. Nonetheless, through his love of drawing and his preferred motifs—emphasis on exaggeration, distortion, and fantasy—he finds common ground with artists from many other times and places. To trace these connections, this resource brings together an idiosyncratic array of graphic works from LACMA’s holdings, chosen by Burton in consultation with the curatorial staff for a related installation. Share the following images with your students and use or adapt the enclosed discussion questions to your students’ diverse needs and learning styles.

## WHAT IS A PRINT?

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**A** PRINT IS A WORK OF ART MADE BY transferring an image from an original source to another surface, usually paper. Prints are created through an indirect transfer process. Most forms of printmaking involve a press by which one applies pressure to a metal plate, stone, or block, allowing the transfer of the image to the second surface. Printmaking is a way for artists to make multiples of an image.

Various printing methods including woodcut, engraving or etching, lithography, and screen printing have evolved over the long history of the medium. An artist selects the particular technique depending on the distinct visual effects that they want to produce. Below is a list of common printmaking techniques. Visit [www.moma.org/interactives/projects/2001/whatisaprint/print.html](http://www.moma.org/interactives/projects/2001/whatisaprint/print.html) to learn more about printmaking and view demonstrations of different techniques.

**Drypoint** – An intaglio process closely related to engraving. A line is scratched directly into a copper plate with a drypoint needle, which throws up a ridge of metal known as a burr on both sides of the line. The curled copper burr holds a quantity of ink, which prints as a rich smudge. The resulting lines are thicker, softer, and almost blurred in effect when compared to traditional engraving.

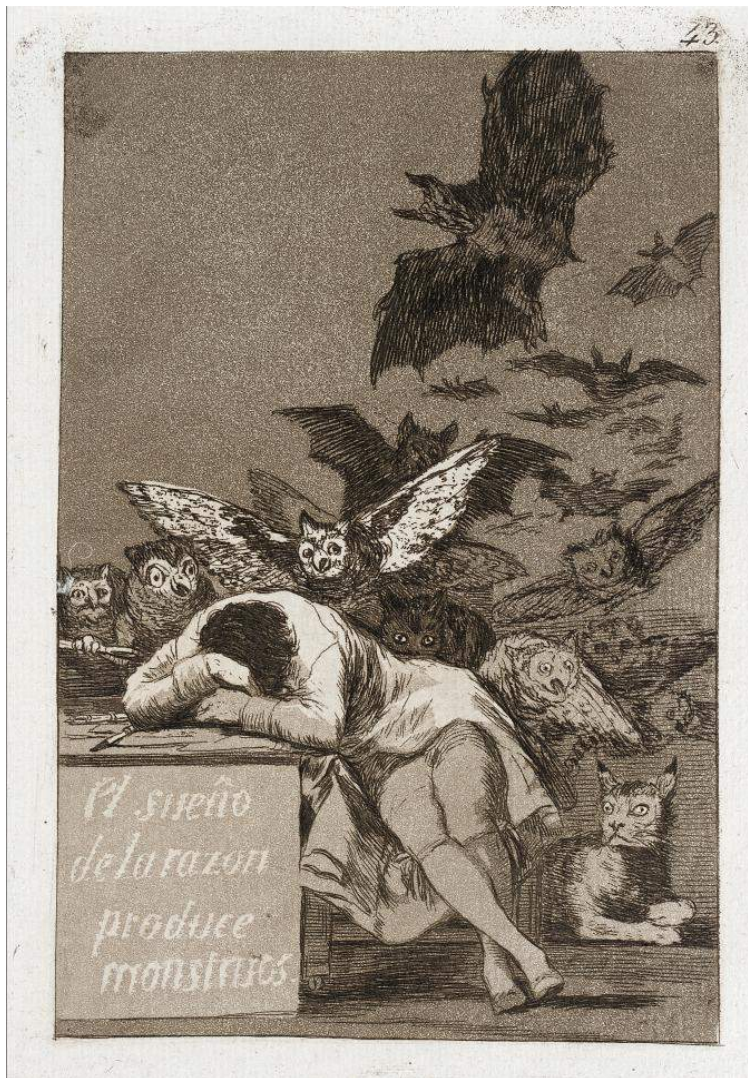
**Engraving** – A method of cutting or incising a design into metal, with a sharp tool called a burin or graver. The lines are neatly incised and then filled with ink that is transferred under high pressure to paper using a printing press. Engraving is an intaglio process.

**Etching** – related to engraving, but uses acid (rather than a burin or graver) to incise a metal plate along lines scratched into the plate's surface. A metal plate is coated with an acid-resistant film, into which the artist draws with an etching needle to create the lines to be printed. When the plate is submerged in acid, the acid bites (or corrodes) the plate in the exposed lines and areas. The longer the exposure to the acid, the darker the line when printed. Etching is an intaglio process.

**Intaglio** – An Italian word used to describe any of the various processes of cutting into a metal (usually copper) plate to create grooves or furrows, which are then filled with ink and used to print on paper.

**Lithograph** – A printing technique that uses a flat slab of limestone or a metal plate as the transfer surface. To produce a lithograph, the artist draws on the transfer surface using a greasy medium. He or she then moistens the surface with water, but as the greasy medium repels water, the water settles only on the unmarked areas. The stone or plate is then rolled with a greasy printer's ink that only adheres to the drawn marks. This inked image is transferred to paper through a printing press.

**Woodcut** – A relief printing process, in which the design is drawn directly onto the surface of a wood block, carved into the plank (as opposed to the end) grain of the wood. The parts that are to remain white on the print are cut away, leaving the black lines in relief. A woodcut can be printed by hand or with the aid of a printing press.



Francisco de Goya (Spain, 1746–1828), *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1799, etching and aquatint, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{5}{16}$  in., Paul Rodman Mabury Trust Fund, 63.11.43. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

THIS ETCHING WAS MADE BY SPANISH PAINTER AND PRINTMAKER FRANCISCO DE GOYA. IN THIS self-portrait, Goya imagines himself asleep amid his drawing tools with owls, bats, and other creatures surrounding him. Satirically titled *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, the work is part of a series of etchings published by Goya.

- Make a list of all of the details that capture your attention. What artistic choices did Goya use to create a dreamlike atmosphere?
- What do you think the phrase “Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters” might mean? Does knowing the title change or alter your impression? Does the interplay of words and image add to the sense of horror and humor? If you could retitling the etching, what would you name it?



Odilon Redon (France, 1840–1916), *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts Toward Infinity)*, 1882, Lithograph, 17¼ x 12¼ in., Wallis Foundation Fund in memory of Hal B. Wallis, AC1997.14.1.1 Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

FRENCH ARTIST ODILON REDON WAS KNOWN FOR TRANSFORMING THE NATURAL WORLD INTO dark visions and strange fantasies. Throughout his life, poetry and prose exerted a powerful influence on his imagination and functioned as inspiration for a number of paintings, drawings, and prints. This print was inspired by writer Edgar Alan Poe's tales of mystery and the macabre.

- Discuss the mood suggested in this lithograph. Consider the artist's use of line, shape, color, or value (a color's lightness or darkness).
- Illustrate a poem of your choice, visually capturing its theme and mood.





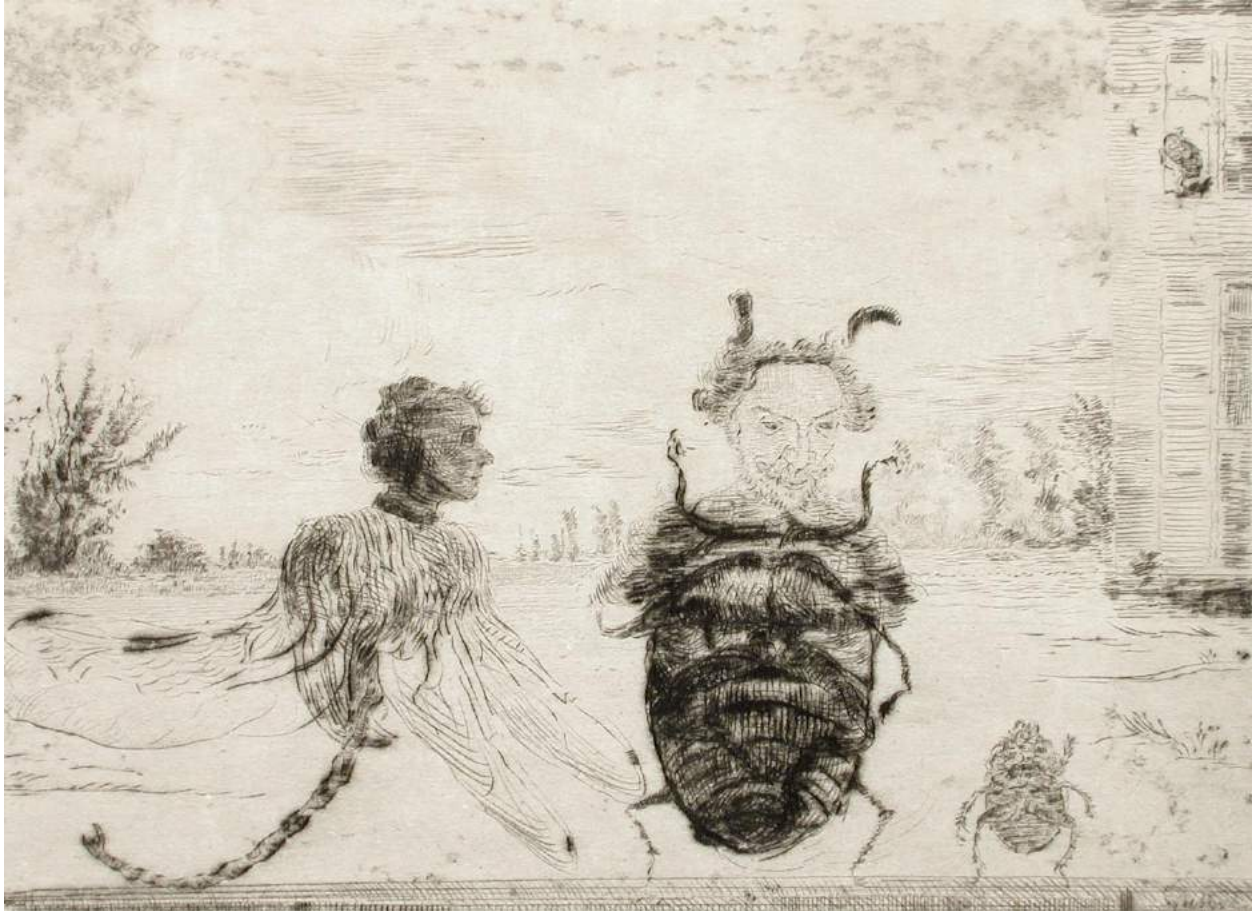
Félicien Victor Joseph Rops (Belgium, 1833–1898), *The Supreme Vice*, 1884, etching and aquatint, 4 1/4 x 3 1/2 in., gift of Michael G. Wilson, M.79.233.42. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA



James Ensor (Belgium, 1860–1949), *Death Chasing the Flock of Mortals*, 1896 Etching and drypoint, 9 1/4 x 6 1/2 in., purchased with funds provided by the Judith Rothschild Foundation, Joan Palevsky, Dr. Richard A. Simms, Julius L. and Anita Zelman, Daws and Carla Waffer, and Urban S. Hirsch III, M.2003.42. © 2011 James Ensor Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / SABAM, Brussels, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

THE BIZARRE AND THE MACABRE ARE EQUALLY INTERESTING TO TIM BURTON AND TO ARTISTS IN the late nineteenth century. See the lithographs above.

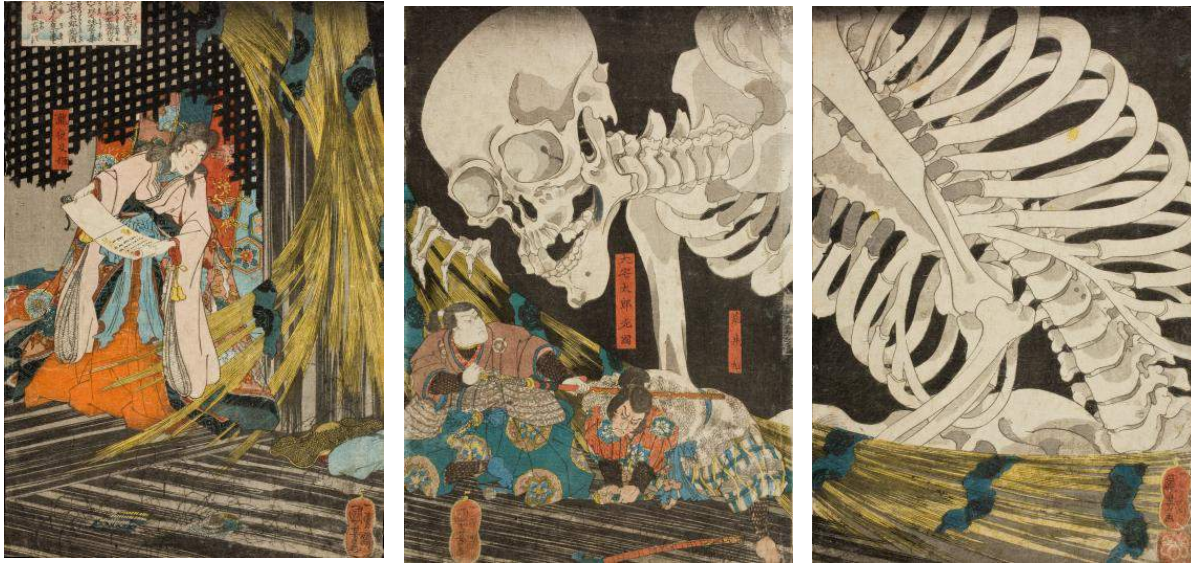
- What similarities do you notice in these works? Differences? What role do the skeletons play in each composition?
- Write a story for each artwork. What details provided by the artist add to your interpretation? What details did you add to the artist’s narrative? Pair up and compare and contrast each writer’s story.



James Ensor (Belgium, 1860–1949) , *Peculiar Insects*, 1888, Drypoint, 4 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 6 in., Herbert R. Cole Collection, M.84.31.466. © 2011 James Ensor Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / SABAM, Brussels. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

BELGIAN ARTIST JAMES ENSOR SHARED HIS TASTE FOR THE BIZARRE WITH MANY OF HIS contemporaries, among them the French symbolist Odilon Redon (see page 4), who, like Ensor, admired the American writer Edgar Allen Poe. The hybrid creatures and lively skeletons Ensor conjured up, were later echoed in the work of his successors such as the German expressionist Otto Dix (see cover).

- Hybrid creatures have served as inspiration for visual and literary artists alike, from Pablo Picasso’s *Centaur* (search for “Centaur” on [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org)) to Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands*.
- Compare and contrast two differing species. Make a list of what makes each animal unique, from the habitat in which it lives to the food that it eats. Choose two to three traits from each and combine into a third, hybrid creature. Be sure to give your genetic experiment a title by naming your new species.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Japan, 1797–1861), *Mitsukuni and the Skeleton Spector*, mid-1840s, woodblock print triptych, sheet: 14 x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  in., The Joan Elizabeth Tanney Bequest, M.2006.136.290a–c, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

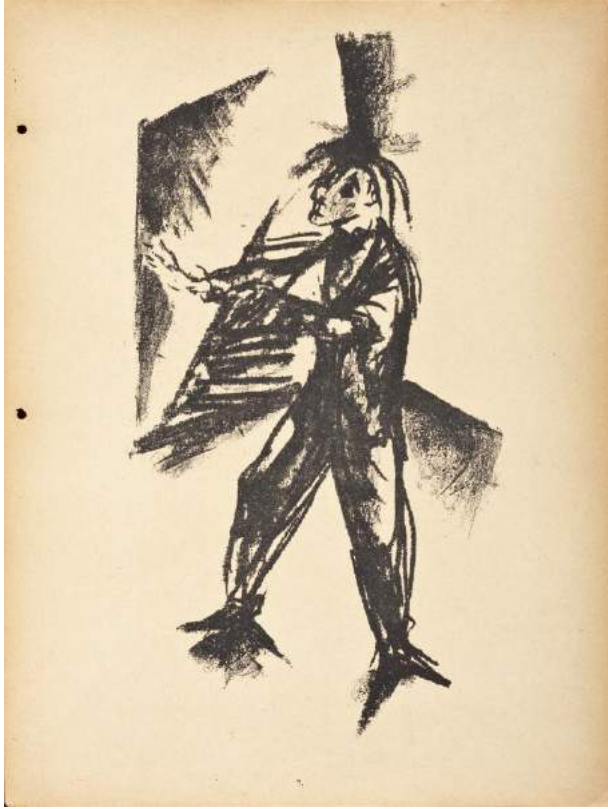
THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A WOODBLOCK PRINT CREATED BY UTAGAWA KUNIYOSHI, ONE OF the premiere printmakers of nineteenth century Japan. Kuniyoshi developed a unique style in his prints, often spreading a scene dynamically across all three sheets of the traditional triptych format and linking the composition with one bold unifying element—in this case, the skeleton.

- A triptych is like a puzzle in that the composition is broken up into parts that can serve to define the other as you piece the overall picture back together.
- Create your own version of an everyday puzzle by drawing a scene on a sheet of poster board, making sure that the composition covers every corner of the board. Carefully dissect the composition by cutting the sheet into pieces. (If necessary, back individual sheets with cardboard to make sure they are sturdy enough to withstand play.) Test your puzzle out on a friend and see if he or she can solve it!



Elfriede Lohse-Wachtler (Germany, 1899–1940), *The Sleepwalker*, 1919, woodcut, sheet: 14 x 10¼ in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.40. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

- An emphasis on line and the figure defines this composition. Compare and contrast this German woodcut with the Japanese woodcut on page 7. Note the different line qualities that the artists were able to achieve with the same printmaking technique.
- What tools do you think the artist might have used to capture these scenes in wood?



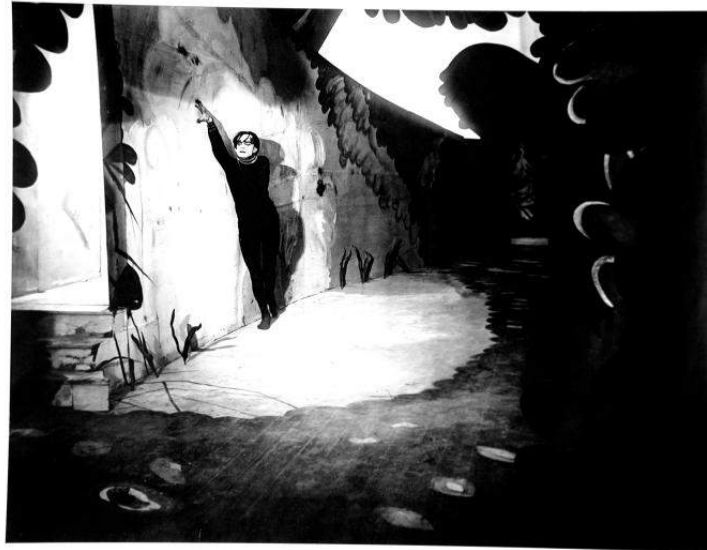
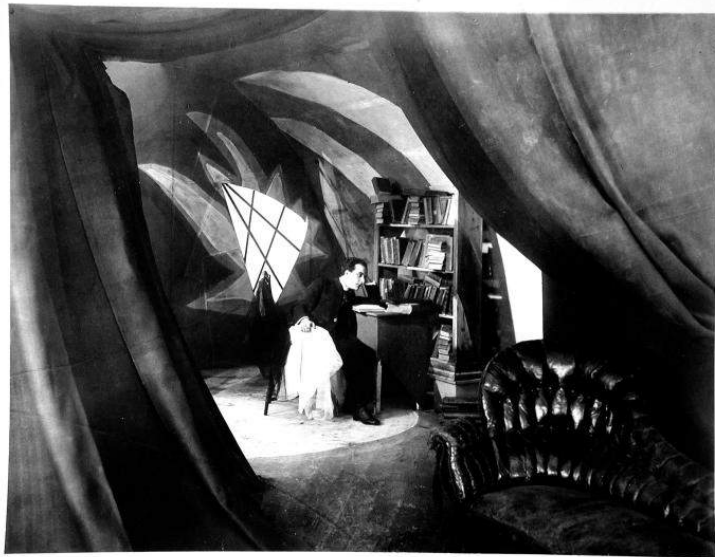
Wilhelm Kohlhoff (Germany, 1893–1971), *The Blind Man*, c. 1919, lithograph on heavy wove paper, 10 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{11}{16}$  in, The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, purchased with funds provided by Anna Bing Arnold, Museum Associates Acquisition Fund, and deaccession funds, 83.1.120g, © Wilhelm Kohlhoff Estate/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA



Hugo Steiner-Prag (Bohemia, now Czech Republic, 1880–1945) *The Way to Horror*, 1915–16, lithograph, The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.68L, © Hugo Steiner-Prag Estate, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

BURTON'S CHARACTERS AND NARRATIVES OFTEN REPRESENT THE WELL-MEANING "OUTSIDER," the misunderstood, the lonely, and the alienated, all reflections of his childhood experiences. This type of solitary experience is similarly captured in the German Expressionist lithographs above.

- Describe the figures in each artwork, paying careful attention to their body language and gestures.
- Compare and contrast these figures with the drawing of Edward Scissorhands by Tim Burton in the related resource. What is similar and different about the artist's use of line, shape, and value? How does the use of these artistic devices contribute to the individual character and its expression?



Set photographs from the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919, Film directed by Robert Wiene; sets designed by Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig. Gelatin silver prints, 9<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.1a, b, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

THE FILM STILLS PICTURED ABOVE AND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE ARE FROM THE 1919 FILM *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* which exemplifies the movement of artistic motifs across media. This story about madmen and murder, directed by Robert Wiene, is notable for its distorted reality. The sets were painted directly on flat canvas by artists Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig.

- Describe the scenes above. Note the sharp angles, tilted walls, and curiously-shaped windows that seem to be closing in on the figure.
- Consider how the filmmaker used value, or shades of light and dark, to distort reality. Burton similarly experiments with light and dark in his drawings, sculptures, and films.



Set photographs from the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919, Film directed by Robert Wiene; sets designed by Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig, Gelatin silver prints, 9<sup>5/16</sup> x 13 in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.1d, f, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

Cover Image: Otto Dix (Germany, 1891–1969), *Illusion Act*, 1922, etching with drypoint, sheet: 19 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 16 $\frac{15}{16}$  in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.288.50b. © Otto Dix Estate/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates /LACMA

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## Classroom Activity

### *Sketchbooks and the Artist's Process*

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<b>Enduring Understanding</b>	Artists often use sketchbooks to brainstorm, edit, and think through ideas to find their unique artistic style.
<b>Grades</b>	K–12
<b>Time</b>	One class period
<b>Visual Art Concepts</b>	Drawing, writing, draft and revision, practice, bookmaking
<b>Materials</b>	Copy paper, rubber bands, popsicle sticks, scissors, and colored pencils. Optional: cardstock, collage materials (magazine clippings, construction and/or patterned paper, stamps, etc.), and glue sticks.
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>View and discuss Tim Burton's <i>Untitled (Edward Scissorhands)</i>, 1990</p> <p>What do you see? What do you think makes this drawing or this figure unique?</p> <p>What is a sketch? Do you think this was the first sketch that the artist made of this figure? What do you see that makes you say that?</p> <p>Artists often use sketchbooks to record their ideas, both visually and in words. Why might you sketch an idea first before you create the final product? When an idea pops into your head, do you write the idea on paper? Why is it valuable to record your ideas and your thinking? Why would it be useful to have all drafts of one idea in one place? What else can you use a sketchbook for?</p>
<b>Making Art</b>	Transform ordinary and inexpensive materials into a sketchbook using basic materials such as popsicle sticks, rubber bands, and paper. First, cut large (about 17½ x 24-inch) sheets of paper into three long, horizontal strips of equal dimension. Layer 6 horizontal strips on top of each other, one at a time. Fold the set of sheets in half horizontally as if you are folding a book. The folded edge will serve as the binding. Cut triangles from both the top and bottom corner of the folded edge. Open the book and lay it on a flat surface. Place a popsicle stick on top of the center fold. Enlist a partner to lift the book with the popsicle stick in place. String a rubber band underneath the book along the fold, using the top and bottom of the popsicle stick as anchors.

**Making Art**

Fold the book again and decide if you will orient your sketchbook horizontally or vertically. Now, decorate the cover using colored pencils. Remember, you will use your sketchbook to document your great ideas and thinking, so the cover design should say something about you!

If you have access to cardstock (a sturdier, thicker paper), create a sketchbook using cardstock as the cover. Hole punch the folded edge and string yarn or ribbon through the holes as binding. Use collage materials to decorate the cover.

**Reflection**

Find a partner and share your sketchbooks with each other. How did you design your cover? What does the cover design say about you? What do you think you might use your sketchbook for? Keep it with you wherever you go because you never know when and where you will get inspired!

## Classroom Activity

### *Unconventional Printmaking*

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**Enduring Understanding** Prints can be made using a variety of materials on different surfaces.

**Grades** K–12

**Time** One to two class periods

**Visual Art Concepts** Monotype, positive and negative space, composition

**Materials** Pencils, Q-Tips, printing plate (aluminum foil, styrofoam plate, wax paper, or gelatin), printing paper (copy paper, construction paper, or canvas), water-soluble printing ink or acrylic paint, rubber brayers, and baby oil for cleaning brayers. Optional: collage materials (magazine clippings, patterned paper, feathers, leaves and twigs, etc.) and glue sticks.

**Talking about Art** Look closely at the print by Odilon Redon, *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts toward Infinity)*, 1882, included in the essay and CD.

What do you see? What do you think might be happening in this scene? Odilon created this artwork as part of a series called *To Edgar Poe*, dedicated to the author and poet Edgar Allen Poe. Redon based the majority of his work on thematic subjects and was greatly inspired by literature.

What materials do you think the artist used to create this? Print-making is the production of an image on a surface, usually paper. The process was originally created to produce books and newspapers using a printing press, but artists create prints as artworks using a variety of materials. This print is an example of a lithograph, which means that the artist carved the image into a piece of stone, rolled ink on top of the stone, then turned it upside down and printed an impression of his carving onto a piece of paper. See other examples of lithographs in the enclosed CD.

**Making Art** A monotype is a different kind of print, although it uses the same basic printing process as lithography. However, in techniques such as lithography the artist develops a positive image by drawing or carving a picture on a blank printing plate.

For a monotype, on the other hand, the artist develops a negative image by rolling ink on the printing plate first and drawing a picture by removing paint.

## **Making Art**

Artists usually create a sketch of the image first so take some time to think about the story your print will tell. Try drawing inspiration from literature by illustrating a verse from a poem or a scene from a book.

To produce a monotype of the drawing, use a brayer to evenly roll ink or paint onto a printing plate, such as a piece of aluminum foil, wax paper, or a styrofoam plate. To create a gelatin plate, see the recipe below. Then, draw the image on the plate with a pencil, creating lines by gently removing paint. Use a Q-Tip to create gradations like the cloudy sky in Redon's print. When the drawing is finished, choose a printing surface, such as a piece of canvas, copy paper, or colored construction paper. (If using a light-colored ink, choose a dark-colored piece of paper, or, if using a dark ink, choose a light-colored piece of paper.) Place the paper on top of the printing plate and burnish (rub) the back of the paper evenly. Begin in the middle of the paper and work out to the edges. Hold the plate firmly and lift an edge of the paper to make sure the paint has transferred onto the paper. If it has not, repeat the process, applying more pressure to the back of the paper. Pull the paper off the plate and behold your print!

Optional: If you have access to collage materials, add finishing touches by gluing on different materials or by cutting the paper to change its shape.

Consider creating a series of prints over multiple class periods that illustrates themes, verses, or scenes from a literary work.

## **Reflection**

What was the inspiration for your print? Does your final print match your original sketch? How is it similar? How is it different? Share your print with others.

## **Gelatin Plate Recipe**

Mix two tablespoons of unflavored edible gelatin for every cup of water. A higher concentration of gelatin is needed to create a firm printing surface so determine the amount of water needed to make a plate between  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick. Boil half of the water needed and keep the other half cool. Stir the gelatin powder slowly into the cool water. Next, stir the gelatin solution slowly into the hot water until it is dissolved. Pour the solution into a non-stick pan or container. Use paper scraps to remove any bubbles. The gelatin will harden without refrigeration, but keeping it cool will extend the life of the plate for up to a couple of weeks. Do not put solution down the drain.

## Classroom Activity

### *Character Design: From Cute to Spooky and Beyond*

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<b>Enduring Understanding</b>	In art and storytelling, unexpected combinations can create humorous and unique characters.
<b>Grades</b>	1–12
<b>Time</b>	Two class periods
<b>Visual Art Concepts</b>	Drawing and writing, character and narrative, shapes, juxtaposition, sculpture and animation
<b>Materials</b>	Air-drying clay such as Model Magic (white), markers, pencils, and paper. Optional: craft picks, colored wire, scissors, and small sheets of cardboard.
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>View and discuss Tim Burton’s <i>Untitled (The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories)</i>, 1998</p> <p>What do you see? What kinds of shapes do you notice? Curvy shapes such as circles and ovals are called organic shapes. Shapes with straight lines and angles such as squares and triangles are called geometric shapes. Burton used organic shapes to create this character and often uses particular shapes to communicate personality traits.</p> <p>Imagine that this character could walk and talk. What would he say and do? What would his name be? Write a story using him as the main character.</p> <p>Tim Burton identifies this character as Stain Boy. Read more about Stain Boy in the book, <i>The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories</i>, or view the online animated series at <a href="http://www.timburtoncollective.com/multimedia.html">www.timburtoncollective.com/multimedia.html</a>.</p> <p>We have all seen characters that look cute, funny, or spooky. Draw an example of a cute character from a book, a television show or movie, or from your imagination. Use words to describe who your character is and what your character looks like. Next, draw a spooky character. Again, use words to describe your character. Now, choose two traits from your first character that are especially cute and two traits from your second character that are especially spooky. Draw a third character that combines all of these traits.</p>

## **Making Art**

Sculpt a model of your character using air-drying clay. Think about how you will make the transition from a two-dimensional drawing to a three-dimensional sculpture. To start, roll the clay into a ball. The ball will serve as the foundation of the character's figure. Remove parts of clay to sculpt appendages such as arms, legs, or a cape. Consider sculpting with a craft pick or a pencil to add detail and texture. Reattach parts by pressing them onto the body so that all parts are flush with the whole or reattach limbs with wire. Remember, your model should stand and support its own weight so smaller parts should be substantial enough to balance the figure.

When finished sculpting, you can add color immediately without waiting for the clay to dry. Color with markers to bring your model to life!

## **Reflection & Display**

For reflection and display in the classroom, consider placing each sculpture on a piece of cardboard as a base. Students can decorate their base with their character's name and the shapes and colors they incorporated into the model.

Instruct students to clear their desks and place model sculptures on top for a classroom gallery walk. Give students a few minutes to walk around the room and study their peers' characters. Remember, no loud talking or touching artworks in the gallery! Reconvene to discuss and chart similarities and differences between the characters.

## Classroom Activity

### *Curating the Classroom*

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<b>Enduring Understanding</b>	Curators classify, organize, and define artworks in relationship to each other and to an exhibition space.
<b>Grades</b>	5–12
<b>Time</b>	Two class periods
<b>Visual Art Concepts</b>	Curation, exhibition, checklist, planning, space, collaboration
<b>Materials</b>	Paper, pencils, postcards or color prints of artworks, student artwork
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>Curators organize exhibitions by carefully selecting works of art that share a common theme or origin. They decide how the artworks are best viewed in the space of a gallery and what story that arrangement of artworks tells. For example, in the <i>Burton Selects</i> exhibition (see the CD), museum curators and Tim Burton selected prints from LACMA’s collection that relate to the artist’s favorite themes and motifs such as humor, horror and fantasy.</p> <p>Choose a reproduction of an artwork for study and reflection. What did you first notice about this artwork? After looking at the artwork, what do you notice now that you didn’t notice at first? How does this artwork use color, narrative, composition, or space?</p>
<b>Art Activity</b>	<p>Find a partner or fellow curator to work with and discuss the artworks you selected. What is similar about the artworks that you and your fellow curator chose? How are the artworks different?</p> <p>Using a set of postcards, consider what other works might complement the works that you and your fellow curator chose. What categories could you use for choosing supplemental works (i.e., color palette, theme/narrative, style, time period, place of origin, artist, etc.)? Select two to three other artworks and create an exhibition checklist that includes the artworks you used as inspiration.</p> <p>Think of an indoor or outdoor space on campus where you could hypothetically mount your exhibition. Draw a blueprint, or map, of that space. How do the artworks in your checklist relate to one another? How will you organize the exhibition in a way that will both explain to viewers how the works relate and respond to the particular space you have selected? Add to your blueprint by sketching your exhibition layout.</p>

**Art Activity**

Repeat the activity above using students' completed artworks in place of artwork reproductions. Students should have at least two completed artworks to choose from to contribute to the classroom exhibition. Students will work in curation teams of three to five, answering the questions from the previous page in response to a peer's artwork. When the group reconvenes, students will create their team checklist by choosing one artwork from each member to exhibit. They should answer the second set of questions from the previous page in response to the classroom as a gallery space and sketch a plan for how they will mount their exhibition.

**Reflection**

What role did you play in your curatorial team? What role did others take? How did the different roles interact with each other? What made the exhibition a success? How does the completed exhibition compare to your original exhibition layout? If you could reorganize or remount it, what would you change? What will you title your exhibition?



# Tim Burton: The Artist's Process

## Selected Resources

### Related Curriculum Materials

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*Evenings for Educators* resources include an illustrated essay, color images or overhead transparencies, classroom activities, and related resources. Printed curriculum is available for purchase through LACMA's Education Department or browse selected curricula online at [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org) (Programs/Education/Evenings for Educators).

*Artists' Perspectives: Envisioning the World*  
April 2009

*Telling a Story: Narrative and Symbols in Art*  
November 2007

*Dali and Surrealism*  
December 2007

### Online Resources

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#### *Tim Burton*

**Los Angeles County Museum of Art**  
<http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/tim-burton>  
Features exhibition information and selected artworks. Browse Burton-related stories and videos on LACMA's blog, *Unframed*.

#### *Burton Selects: From LACMA's Collection*

**Los Angeles County Museum of Art**  
<http://www.lacma.org/art/installation/burton-selects-lacmas-collection>  
In conjunction with the exhibition, *Tim Burton*, LACMA invited the filmmaker to fill a gallery with works of his choosing from the permanent collection. Learn about periods of art history that resonate with Burton's vision.

#### *Tim Burton*

**Museum of Modern Art**  
<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2009/timburton/>

Get a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the major retrospective, organized by the Museum of Modern Art and on view in New York before its Los Angeles presentation.

#### *The Fantastical Imaginings for Tim Burton*

**Australian Centre for the Moving Image**  
<http://www.acmi.net.au/ed-kit-tim-burton.htm>  
<http://www.acmi.net.au/ed-kit-burton-gothic.htm>  
These Education Resource Kits were designed for teachers by the second institution to host the retrospective, the Australian Center for the Moving Image. They explore Burton-esque imagery and the Gothic tradition.

#### *What is a Print?*

**Museum of Modern Art**  
<http://www.moma.org/interactives/projects/2001/w-hatisaprint/flash.html>

Since the early Renaissance, drawings have been considered to be especially revealing of the artist's individual genius and style. Prints, by extension, distill the hand-drawn line to its essence and reproduce it for mass distribution. Learn more about the printmaking process with interactive explanations of the most popular printing techniques.

#### *Pressure + Ink: An Introduction to Printmaking*

**Museum of Modern Art**  
<http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/151/907>

Watch artists demonstrate various printmaking techniques in this multimedia introduction.

## Books for Teachers

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Bassie, Ashley. *Expressionism*. London: Sirrocco, 2005. A survey of Expressionist artists such as Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, Emil Nolde, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.\*

Davis, Jessica Hoffman. *Ordinary Gifted Children: The Power and Promise of Individual Attention*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010. An arts educator's narrative about redefining student potential and fostering a love for learning in all students.

Griffiths, Antony. *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. Learn more about the medium of printmaking through artworks from the British Museum's Prints and Drawings collection.

He, Jenny and Ron Magliozzi. *Tim Burton*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009. Published to accompany the originating exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, this book captures the evolution of Burton's creative practices. Illustrated with previously unseen works from the artist's personal archive.\*

Robinson, Ken. *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*. Mankato: Capstone, 2011. Expanding our notion of traditional intelligence to include an individual's creative capacity.

## Books for Students

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Burton, Tim. *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*. New York: Rob Weisbach Books, 1997. A children's poetry book written and illustrated by the filmmaker that prefaces his later *The World of Stainboy* series.\*

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. New York: Tribeca Books, 2011. The classic tale that served as inspiration for Tim Burton's cinematic adaptation.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Doubleday, 1984. An anthology of the influential writer's works.

\* Books available in the Museum Shop