

Classroom Activity

Surrealist Drawing Games

Enduring Understanding	Artists invent games to trigger the imagination and to create collaborative, unexpected artworks.
Grades	K–12
Time	One to two class periods
Visual Art Concepts	Form, gesture, scale, narrative, collaboration, exquisite corpse
Materials	Pencils, colored pencils, erasers, oil pastels, wide tip markers, roll of craft or butcher paper, letter size sketching paper, scissors
Talking about Art	View and discuss the printed image of <i>Cadavre exquis</i> (<i>Exquisite Corpse</i> , 1938) by André Breton, Yves Tanguy, and Jacqueline Lamba included in the curriculum folder.

What do you see in this artwork? Look closely, what materials or tools do you think the artists used to create this *Exquisite Corpse*? Turn to a partner and think about the process of creating this artwork. What steps do you think the artists took to create it? What evidence do you see to support your hypothesis?

Drawing was an important medium for the surrealists and they often collaborated, playing drawing games to create imaginative and unexpected works of art. To create this *Exquisite Corpse*, the artists cut imagery from magazines then each, in turn, affixed a random image to the same sheet of paper. Each added to the artwork, folded their contribution over, then passed the work to the next artist. The process is a game of chance and the result is a collaborative work made without knowing what the artist before had added and not knowing how the game would end.

Look closely at the parts that comprise the body. What everyday objects do you see? If this creature could talk, what would it think, what would it say? What would it sound like as it saunters away? Write a short monologue to accompany the artwork.

Making Art	Group students in teams of three. Using letter-size drawing paper, have students fold the paper into three sections. On the top section, one student will draw a “head,” the middle section a “torso,” and the bottom section the “legs.”
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Give students 5–10 minutes each for drawing, then fold the paper over to conceal the image, and pass to the next artist. Remind students to extend their drawing into the next section so that the next artist knows where to begin his or her drawing. When finished, open the sheet to reveal a strange and disorienting creature.

It is important to note that the body is open to interpretation; the figure can be part human, part animal, and part alien. The body can take the form of a building or an amoeba. Encourage students to think imaginatively. Lastly add color to the background and the figure.

After a few rounds of playing the game, ask each group to select their favorite exquisite corpse. Students will then take the letter size drawing and scale it to “life size” on a roll of craft or butcher paper. The group can decide to alter the original figure slightly, giving the figure gesture or movement. Using markers, oil pastels, and pencils the group will collaboratively add color and detail to the figure. Ask students to think about the division of tasks and how they will work together to execute the life-size work of art. Once completed, cut out the figures and install them in the classroom.

Reflection

Facilitate a gallery walk so that students can view all of the artworks up close. Remember, no touching artworks in the gallery.

What do you see? Discuss the different parts that comprise the bodies. Where did people draw inspiration? Are there similarities? Differences? Which creatures would make interesting cartoon characters? Which look like super heroes, scientific oddities, or story book villains? Have student groups draft and share their character’s story, traits, and action with the class.

Curriculum Connection

Create a collaborative poem describing your character. In the same group of three, have the first student write the first two lines of the poem and pass it to their partner. The second student will continue the poem by adding two more lines, then pass the poem along to the next person to finish. Read the poem aloud to your group then share with the rest of the class.

Compare the process of writing a collaborative poem to drawing a collaborative artwork. Which is easier? Which is more difficult? What did you experience that makes you say that? What would you do differently if you tried again?

Classroom Activity

Life Drawing: Science Illustration

Enduring Understanding	Illustrations are drawings that convey information. A single illustration, whether drawn or painted, can tell us about the nexus of science and art.
Grades	3–12
Time	One to three class periods
Visual Art Concepts	Line, shape, color, representation, perspective, symbolism
Materials	Pencils, colored pencils, pens, paper, scissors, glue, specimens from nature (i.e., plants, flowers, leaves, etc.). Optional: images of nature from newspapers, magazines, or the internet.
Talking About Art	<p>View and discuss the printed image of Ambrosius Bosschaert’s <i>Bouquet of Flowers on a Ledge</i> (1619–1620) included in the curriculum folder.</p> <p>What do you notice about this painting? Look closely at the many details. Can you identify examples of nature? The artist Ambrosius Bosschaert chose these examples with great care and intention, including flowers like the iris, rose, lily, and tulip as well as insects like the butterfly, dragonfly, bee, and spider. List all of the examples of nature that you can find then categorize each according to flowers, plants, insects, and animals. Share your observations with a partner. What details did you notice that your partner did not? What more can you find?</p> <p>The artist captured other natural elements like the stages of development from a bud to a fully-opened flower. How would you describe the style with which he captured these stages of life? Choose one example, such as the rose, then compare and contrast it with a real-world photograph. Does his representation look realistic or imagined? What do you see in the painting that makes you say that? What resources might the artist have used to create a work with such accuracy?</p> <p>During the 1600s when Bosschaert created this painting, drawing served a strictly preparatory purpose. Before he created this painting, he spent a whole year studying and sketching natural specimens from life. He captured visual elements like line, shape, and color then collected his individual sketches and combined them to create this imagined, yet realistic bouquet.</p>

Making Art

Make a list of natural specimens that you can collect from school, home, or the community. Gather the specimens, combine them as a class, then assign each student a different specimen to research. Collect images and information about your specimen from newspapers, magazines, or the internet. Draft a report describing the qualities and functions of your specimen, including all of the information that you found.

Next, create several sketches of your specimen in pencil. Try, as best you can, to capture specific details by paying careful attention to line and shape. Outline the curvature or form of your specimen then refine the edges in pen. Study the colors of your specimen and, on a separate sheet of paper, use colored pencils to layer and blend the unique colors that you see. Return to your sketch, working from the outline in, to add color to your drawing. When finished, cut out your drawing with scissors.

Collect students' cut-out drawings and arrange them to create an imagined, collaborative bouquet. Include a vase and horizon line so that students can add insects and animals to the composition.

Reflection

Display the bouquet in the classroom for two weeks. At the end of each day, ask students to write a one-paragraph journal entry about a new detail that they notice. After many careful observations, reflect on the new things that they found and how the journal entries evolved over time.

Curriculum Connection

Revisit your assigned specimen and think about it from a scientific point of view. What is its natural habitat? What adaptations help it survive in its environment? What is its relationship to humans (i.e., a domesticated species developed by humans, a wild plant/animal that has adapted to city life)? Use your research as a springboard for developing a Science Fair project. Remember to include science illustration in your final display.

Classroom Activity

Abstract Still Lifes

Enduring Understanding Ideas artists represent in pictures are composite images that we don't actually experience, rather they are approximate memories of what they see.

Grades 3–12

Time One class period

Visual Art Concepts Line, contour, shape, form, value, representational and non-representational, positive and negative space, composition, perspective, collage, Cubism

Materials Graphite pencils, colored pencils, oil pastels, letter-size drawing paper, scissors, glue sticks, 12x18" drawing paper, still-life objects (such as fruit, flowers, bottles)

Talking about Art View and discuss the printed image of Georges Braque's *Glass and Playing Cards* (circa 1912) included in the curriculum folder.

What do you see in this artwork? How would you describe the lines? Do the lines combine to form representational shapes from life? Trace them with your finger then trace any abstract forms that you see. Do you recognize any of these abstract shapes?

Modern artists were inspired from life but instead of mimicking real-world objects, they reduced shapes and forms into simple line and value on paper. These artists, called Cubists, often captured multiple perspectives at once, as Braque did in *Glass and Playing Cards*. Look closely, can you spot any household items such as playing cards and a glass? Are they represented from one vantage point or from multiple perspectives?

When you look at objects, a bowl of fruit for example, do you see all sides of the entire bowl at once or do you see small sections at a time? Do you see the entire piece of fruit all at once? Or, do you assemble the 360-degree view in your mind? Look out the window to see the landscape before you. Describe the vantage point to a partner. How would the view look different if you and your partner took a different perspective?

Cubists, such as Braque, acknowledged the limited ability of the human eye to view objects from one angle at a time and represented what they imagined were multiple moments and impressions in one work of art.

Making Art

Create a source list for a still life, including objects and materials such as flowers, bottles, or objects you may find in the classroom. Arrange the objects in a dynamic composition in the center of the classroom and clear enough room around the table for close viewing. Walk around the still life and sketch it from at least five different vantage points, including lower and higher points of view. Use graphite pencils to draw the contour lines, or silhouette, that you see. Focus on drawing what you see, with careful attention to shape, form, and composition. Draw large, trying to fill the entire piece of paper then add color to the objects in your still life with colored pencils and/or oil pastels.

Cut away the negative space that surrounds your still life then cut out or tear each of the still-life objects. Put the shapes in a pile and mix the pieces up. Using your memory of viewing the still life at different angles, assemble the shapes to represent multiple views at once. Cut the shapes further and rearrange them until you have reached a desired composition. Then, glue the shapes onto a larger sheet of drawing paper. Finally, using colored pencil and/or oil pastels draw the table that your collage still life sits on. Draw the table from any vantage point you desire.

Reflection

Think about the process of viewing the still life from multiple angles. How did careful observation influence your drawing? How did your memory of the 360-degree view influence your final collage?

Curriculum Connection

Use your knowledge of geometry to classify parts of Braque's collage. What types of lines (parallel, perpendicular, intersecting) and shapes (arc, right triangle, rhombus) do you see? What types of angles did he create (right, obtuse, acute)? On the classroom board, generate a list of geometric elements that you can find in this work of art. Compare your findings to your own still life collage.

Classroom Activity

Experimental Drawing

Enduring Understanding	Drawing techniques can incorporate spontaneous and playful experimentation.
Grades	5–12
Time	One class period
Visual Art Concepts	Shape, movement, representational and non-representational, positive and negative space, decalomania
Materials	Sumi inks (various colors), sumi ink brushes, paper (various types), black construction paper or poster board
Talking about Art	View and discuss the printed image of Georges Hugnet’s <i>Untitled</i> (1935–36) included in the curriculum folder.

What do you see in this artwork? How would you describe the shapes in the artwork? Use your finger to outline positive shapes then outline negative shapes. Turn the artwork 180 degrees, do any images emerge? How would you describe the feeling that the artwork exudes?

Look closely, what materials or tools do you think the artist used to create *Untitled*? Georges Hugnet used a process called decalomania to create this artwork. First he applied gouache (a type of opaque paint) to a single sheet of paper then laid a second sheet on top, squishing the paint between the two sheets. By applying pressure in various areas, Hugnet was able to manipulate the paint spontaneously. He pulled the sheets apart to reveal an abstract result, devoid of any representation, but when viewed closely, shapes may emerge.

Surrealists like Hugnet experimented with materials, media, and art forms because it challenged the academic approach to artmaking. Think about the materials that you use in school. How can you use them in new and innovative ways to create art?

Making Art

Dip a brush into ink until the bristles fill with ink then flick the ink onto a sheet of paper. Try not to let the bristles of the brush touch the paper allowing small pools of ink to form on the paper. Next, lay another sheet of paper on top of the inked paper and press both sheets together, rubbing in different areas and with varying pressure. Peel the two sheets apart. What do you see? Do any of the shapes reveal representations from life?

Dip another brush into a different color ink and either connect or enhance the shapes that have spontaneously formed. Let your hand move on its own, without thinking about the result. Let your hand move freely in the process.

Make a few paintings, experimenting with ink colors, varying intensities by diluting ink with water. Try different application techniques like flicking and dripping the ink from the brush. You can even pick one pair of symmetrical decalomania paintings, transforming one of the sheets into a representational painting. Add new lines and shapes to one sheet while leaving the other more abstract. Juxtapose the two together and display them on black construction paper or poster board. Name each artwork based on the shapes that emerge.

Reflection

Once the artworks are dry, display them around the classroom. Facilitate a gallery walk so that students can view all of the paintings. Remember, no touching artworks in the gallery.

How are the paintings similar? How are they different? What shapes do you see? What moods do they evoke? How did the process of decalomania differ from how you have previously used paint before? Turn to a partner and discuss what you enjoyed most about the process of decalomania. Ask your partner to title one of your decalomania works based on the different shapes that he/she sees.

Curriculum Connection

Write a dialogue between your two paintings. Did a character emerge in your representational painting? If not, use one of the shapes as inspiration for your character. If your diptych could talk, what would it say? What story or message would it tell? Read your dialogue to a partner then compare the process of making art with that of writing about art. Share your dialogue with the class.

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