

CAEA Lesson Plan Format

LESSON TITLE: “Mini Altoid Shrines”

Name of Presenter: Marian E. Seiders

Grade Level: Elementary MS HS

Background Information:

Assemblage as an art form probably started as early as man, and as wide spread as the world, but it was made an “acceptable” form of art by Dubuffet, Picasso and Braque. There are many wonderful contemporary assemblage artists such as Vanessa German, Betye and Alison Saar, Timothy Washington, Ron Pippin, Michael DeMeng.....and many, many others. It is a very important part of Art History and the modern aesthetic, and has become more popular over time, especially with the onset of environmental concerns and the notion of recycling. It has also been part of the tradition of Folk/Outsider Art for hundreds of years. Making assemblage is “adult play”, a form of re-creation using what most people think of as trash and reforming it into a beautiful expression. This causes people to look at the discarded in a different way and to see that there can be a use for the most mundane things.

Content Standards:

Visual Art content standards addressed

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.1 Solve a visual arts problem...

2.3 Develop skill in using mixed media

2.6 Create an original work of art

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.1 Describe how art reflects cultural values

3.2 Compare and contrast works of art from various periods

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.1 Explain the intent of a personal work of art etc.

4.3 Take active part in small group discussion, etc.

4.4 Develop and apply specific and appropriate criteria to assess/critique works

4.5 Identify what was done/reworked in personal work and how it improved the work

Vocabulary:

Naif Art, Outsider Art, Folk Art, Art Brut, Assemblage, Additive Sculpture, Theme, Symbolism/Symbols, re-cycled art, juxtaposition, found object, metaphor, urban, readymade, Combine, shrine,ephemera

Materials:

Alltoid Box/interesting object to serve as a base for the art piece, decorative papers, variety of found/broken objects(jewelry/toys/puzzle pieces/game pieces, wood, rusty metal, etc.), variety of ephemera (interesting paper pieces(ticket stubs/lists/receipts/ledgers/labels/photos/etc.), glue(E6000, 5 min epoxy, glue guns), wire, awl, hammer, string/thread, paint (acrylic dries fast)....and anything else that looks interesting!

Motivation:

Start students out by showing them examples of assemblage art, or showing them videos about it. If you are doing Altoid boxes with them, download examples of altoid box art from the internet. There are many examples, and Pinterest is an excellent source. I show them examples also of famous assemblage artists such as Picasso, Simon Rhodia and Watt's Towers, Dali, Oppenheim, Cornell, Nevelson, Marisol, Kienholtz, Herms, Arman, Betye Saar, Ron Pippin, Vanessa German, Heidelberg Project, Mr. Imagination, etc. Videos available are ones such as "Conjure Women of the Arts" (the Saars), "America's Weirdest Homes", "Recycled, Re-seen, Folk Art From The Global Scrap Heap", "Wild Wheels". There are many to choose from. We have discussions about recycling, how our ancestors "jury rigged" things, have they ever done that?, the beauty of rust/worn paint, antiques, etc.

Procedure:

- 1) Introduce term "assemblage" and briefly cover the art history of assemblage and pertinent vocabulary, showing examples of the different periods/artists covered (2-3 class periods depending on the depth you want to go into)
- 2) Show pictures of altered altoid boxes to give students an idea of what the possibilities are. Class discussion of what works best and what doesn't, interesting and unusual subjects/treatments, how the artists unify their pieces, use of texture, color, line, etc. (1-2 class periods)
- 3) Brainstorm as a class possible themes and have students list their "favorites" i.e.. foods, people, periods of history, flowers, animals, cultural issues, poems/song lyrics, books, etc. etc. You could also just assign a theme in advance that everyone will do. Discuss creativity in ideas, size of box, and available materials which have to be taken into consideration before beginning. (1 class period)
- 4) Make a list on the board of the steps students should take to make their piece. A. Decide on a theme/main idea for the box B. Gather your materials to be used C. Paint/collage back grounds, back and sides of box. D. Decide on the focal point/main figure of box and put that in E. Add any additional pieces that support the main focal point F. Don't forget to consider the sides, top, back, and bottom of box also G. Consider color/texture/shapes, etc. to unify your piece. A discussion of Symbolism, definition and making it personal. (1 class period)
- 5) Give students their altoid box so they can visualize what they might do. I have students come up with three detailed sketches of possible plans for their boxes. I also usually "forbid" some themes in order to make them stretch their ideas....for example, no sports but you can do a shrine to a particular player, no flowers/makeup/phones, Mexican flag, etc. the usual teenage "go to's", I want them to stretch and think a bit about what they are going to do beyond the obvious that they always come up with. (This can take anywhere from 2-4 class periods depending)
- 6) I generally look over and grade the sketches and then mark the ones that I feel would be most interesting. This avoids having students pick the same things, or just do fast/unthoughtful/rushed work. Once they have a theme that has been approved, they can begin. (1 class period)
- 7) I show them a variety of papers/ephemera/junk, etc. in the classroom that they may use. We go over paint use, the correct glues for the types of objects/paper, etc. clean up procedures, etc. Students are encouraged to bring in their own objects/ephemera to make the project more personal. (Part of a class period)
- 8) Students begin creating God help us all!! (Can take 4-8 class periods)

depending) Sometimes I break it down even further and give them 1 class period to collage, 1 to paint, 1-2 to glue, and then a few more to finish up, make adjustments, etc. Some classes will play around too much unless they are given a tangible deadline for each thing.

Assessment and/or Evaluation:

Final projects are first critiqued by the student artist in written form (attached). Then we have a class critique as each piece is shown.

Norms for this are:

- Student is first asked if they want to explain their work to the class, or say anything about it.
 - Next students are asked to make positive observations about the piece, what they like about it, or to comment on what the artist has done well in the piece.
 - Next students are asked to comment on some improvements that could be made on the piece for next time, or to offer ideas for further exploration. All comments are to be positive in nature.
 - Teacher also points out why some things work so well and others don't
- Students are asked to use their "art vocabulary" to speak about the pieces, I coach them for the first few until they catch on.

Sometimes I have students keep track on paper and give each image a grade privately and include the reasons that they have chosen this grade. This keeps them engaged and gives them a better understanding of the grading process a teacher goes through. My grading Rubric is posted on my classroom wall so they can refer to it. (form attached)

Projects are graded according to attached Rubric, with student grades also taken into consideration if I've had them do that.

Class participation in critiques is also graded on amount of participation, appropriateness of comments, ideas offered, etc.

Sometimes I have a test at the end of everything emphasizing vocabulary but also including a few Assemblage History questions. Tests vary depending on the class level and abilities. I don't use just one format.

Extensions:

This lesson is a good one to use near "Earth Day" and can be adapted for Science using a cardboard backing and a variety of recycle materials such as bottle caps, plastic packing forms, tags, crushed cans, etc. to make a recycled collage piece or a 3D piece. We actually have a recycled fashion show and sculpture contest. Mini shrines to a famous scientist would work.

Language Arts could do similar projects to illustrate the theme of a book, or to do an object assemblage portrait of a character in a book. Poems make really great themes to use for an art project of this nature. Students could also make a 3D assemblage piece and then write a story suggested by the piece. Altered books are also an excellent project for LA—using discarded books as the "Base" for an assemblage (instead of the Altoid boxes) that students build on.

History lends itself to assemblage very easily. Students could do mini shrines to a historical figure, or to a culture/civilization. I have done assemblages with my

students based on political/urban issues that they choose to do a piece about, such as homelessness, war, pollution, etc.

Math could do assemblages/shrines about math/famous Mathematicians. Some math concepts could be symbolized in a 3D manner. The idea of “sacred geometry” , the circle and spiral, could be explored using assemblage.