



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2010 Volume I: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Consumer Culture

Is It Trash? Sculpture That Recycles

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.01.08
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This unit has been created to promote the recycling and reusability of objects to create art. Its roots are in the consequences of consumerism; we are dealing with the waste that results from over-consumption. Students will analyze and categorize this waste, and as they experiment with it, they will discover it as a material to create pieces of art. Students will use a wide variety of artists for inspiration, as well as a wide variety of materials.

Students will look for inspiration through several artists of various genres, including: Louise Nevelson, Joseph Cornell, Betye Saar, Andy Goldsworthy and a Recycle Artist, Clare Graham. These artists all work(ed) in different media and, consequently, convey very different messages through their pieces. They will give students a starting point for their own personal sculptures and allow students to appreciate and understand distinctions among many different types of art.

Students will connect these artists to the recycling movement. The artists we discuss will inspire students to see and design their own sculptures out of recycled materials and/or materials in their natural environment. Students will research recycling practices, as well as strategies for reducing waste and reusing certain items. Students will also write journal entries, which will allow time for reflection on some of the environmental issues discussed in class and their thoughts on some of the artists' work. This unit strives to yield not only sculptures that will send a message promoting recycling, reusing and reducing waste, but also students who will reinforce this message themselves and spread it, throughout the course of their lives.

(Recommended for Art, grades 7 and 8)

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