

Curiosity Collage

(art + history; art + character studies)

During the Renaissance, the wealthy collected possessions of value and interest and placed them in “Curiosity Cabinets” — specially designed wooden boxes with shelves and drawers built to display their collections. Ranging from small boxes to entire rooms, these displays were the precursors to the modern museum. Inspired by these iconic, often mysterious collections and freed by the acceptance of avant garde art, surrealist Joseph Cornell revisited the Curiosity Cabinet with twentieth-century materials and ideas.

In this lesson plan, students create their own “curiosity box” using a collage technique known as assemblage. Found objects, cut-outs, photos and a diverse number of materials are assembled in a sculptural, three-dimensional collage centered around a personal theme — something that is meaningful to each student. In our example, “art” is the chosen theme. A pre-stretched canvas provides a ready-made box shape that allows painting on all sides and a strong surface to attach objects to. Multiple textures are created with paint, texture medium, paper and tooled foil.



Collage in the classroom is valuable for a number of reasons. It celebrates common materials which are usually inexpensive and readily available, it adheres to very few restrictions and encourages experimentation. The materials called for in this lesson plan should be used as a starting point on which to build ideas for creating unique projects.

Grade Levels 5-12

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

Materials

Blick Studio® Gallery Canvas, 8" x 8" (07121-0088), need one per student

Assorted found objects including: wire, photos, photocopies, printed pages, music, leaves, twigs, shells, rocks, miniatures, small toys, craft items, fabric, machine parts, old jewelry, etc. Size to fit the 5" x 5" opening in back of canvas

Blick Artist's Acrylic, (00624-), assorted colors

Armada® Lollypop Scissors (57057-1007), one per student

Blick Scholastic White Bristle, size 10 bright (05950-1010), one per student

Optional Materials for Embellishment:

Liquitex® Gel Medium, Matte (00618-3086), one jar per 10 students

Texture medium, recommend **Liquitex® Ceramic Stucco Texture Gel** (00609-1016) one jar per 10 students

Textured paper, recommend **Banana Paper**, assorted colors (11224-) and **Unryu**, assorted colors (11223-), one 8" x 10" piece per student

Amaco® Wireform, 1/8" fine mesh (33408-2360), one 2" x 3" piece per student

Coppertone Tooling Foil (60504-8125), one 5" x 7-1/2" piece per student

Modeling Tool (60500-1020), one per student

Wooden Ruler (55427-1012), one per student

Delta® Sobo® Glue (23820-1004),

Chipboard, single-ply (13115-2222), one 5" x 7" piece per student

Copper Tacks (08901-1003), 24 per student

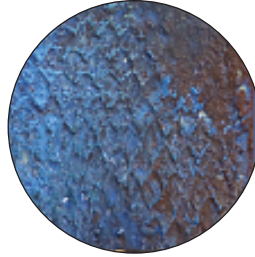
Preparation

1. Assign theme or have students select. Collect images and found objects. Prepare sketches.
2. Remove staples from back of canvas or leave in and cover with texture in Process Step 1. Trim any uneven canvas and secure to wood frame with glue

Process

1. Create texture on all sides of canvas.

- Use paper to create texture. Tear pieces of texture paper, paint matte medium on back side, position on canvas and brush more medium over the front. Allow lightweight paper to form wrinkles.



texture example created with Wireform and Liquitex Ceramic Stucco Gel

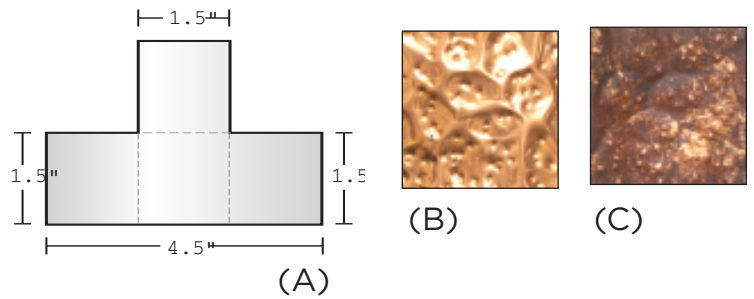
- Use texture gel. Ceramic Stucco is thick and grainy, with a matte finish when dry. Apply with bristle brush and leave the strokes - it will resemble a weathered wood texture. Push textured objects, such as Wireform, into the gel and pull it out - the texture remains, (see photo above). Allow to dry.

2. Paint canvas on all sides with acrylic:

- Allow brush strokes to remain for extra texture.
- Use matte medium with small amounts of color to create translucent glazes on top each other or over collage elements. For example, the text, easel and Mona Lisa (see example on page 1) are photocopies that have been brushed over with matte medium and acrylic color.

3. Create assemblage inside the canvas:

- Objects that can't be found or don't exist, such as the brushstroke "halo" and small palette in the example on page 1, may be cut from chipboard. Paint as in step 2.
- Use a strong glue such as Sobo to place objects, or secure with wire. Wire may pierce the canvas surface to wrap objects on front and back sides.



4. Finish corners with textured metal (optional):

- Cut 4 pieces of tooling foil according to pattern (A)
- On the aluminum side of each piece, create a "pebble" texture by embossing oval and irregular shapes with the round end of the brush handle. Use modeling tool to create a stippled texture on same surface. See (B).
- Turn over and paint with dark earth tones, such as burnt umber and burnt sienna. While paint is still wet, use a paper towel to remove color from embossed surface, exposing copper. See (C)
- Fold tooling foil into corner shape, using ruler and referring to dotted lines on pattern.
- Glue to canvas. For extra security and finished look, nail to wooden frame with copper tacks.

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reverse side of canvas

National Standards:

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.
- **9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use.

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 differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

- **5-8** Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.
- **9-12** Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues or themes in the humanities or sciences.