

Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970

LESSON PLAN

To understand how the act of selection is a central component in contemporary art making.

OBJECTIVES

1. *To select everyday objects as artistic materials either because of their aesthetic design or potential meanings*
2. *To learn how to use a sketch as guideline for creating a sculpture*
3. *To learn how the combination of objects can lead to a multiplicity of interpretations*

BACKGROUND ACTIVITY

Have the students discuss objects that they feel are well designed or aesthetically interesting. The objects could either be a whole object, like the Audi sports coupe, or a part of an object, like a handle on screwdriver.

What makes these objects have visual interest?

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

In 1913, French artist Marcel Duchamp refuted the current notions of artistic creativity with the exhibition of his “ready made” sculptures. The “ready mades” were common mass produced objects that Duchamp either selected and presented or modified by combining with another object.



Marcel Duchamp, *The Fountain*, 1917



Marcel Duchamp, *The Bicycle Wheel*, 1913

Until this time, it was seen as essential that an artist create a work of art with his/her own hands. Duchamp challenged this idea. He believed that the creative act was based primarily on selection and display. This revolutionary idea was not fully embraced until 1960s. However, Duchamp is now seen as one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century.

When were mass produced objects originally created?

How does the selection of mass produced objects as art materials reflect contemporary culture?

How do more traditional art forms such as painting and drawing involve selection?

DISCUSSION



Robert Pruitt, *Lowrider Art*, 2003



Fred Wilson, *Atlas*, 1995

Some contemporary artists, like Robert Pruitt, directly quote the work of Duchamp. Pruitt makes the work his own by selecting materials that relate directly to his own artistic sensibility. Other artists like Fred Wilson make work that looks little like Duchamp's "ready-mades". Unlike Duchamp, Fred Wilson has a distinct cultural commentary. However, the work is essentially created in the same way by the simple assembly of mass produced objects.

What do you think of when you look at *Lowrider Art*? A bicycle? A stool? Something else? How is it like Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*? How is it different? What associations do you make with Fred Wilson's piece? Why?

ACTIVITY

Ask the student to go through their garages and attics. (They could look for inexpensive items at yard sales, flea markets, and thrift stores.) Ask them to bring in several objects that are of interest to them. Have them make a series of sketches that involve combining at least two of the objects together. Make sure the sketch includes a detail showing how the objects are joined. (The students do not need to draw these sketches. They could be made by collaging photographs of these objects, or by manipulating scanned images on the computer.) No elaborate construction is necessary: glue, sewing, simple drilling, etc. should be sufficient.

Select the best/most feasible sketches for construction. Make those objects.

CLOSURE

Display the "ready mades".

Discuss the following:

How do the objects retain their original characteristics and meanings?

How do they take on new meanings?

How does the display affect meaning?