

THE REPURPOSED

Recommended for Grades 9-12 (can be adapted for younger students)

“An ordinary object [could be] elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist.”—Marcel Duchamp

Isaiah Zagar, the creator of Philadelphia’s Magic Gardens, was inspired by many artists of the 20th Century. Marcel Duchamp is one of the most referenced artists throughout Zagar’s work. Duchamp was a Dadaist artist who used the viewer as a participant in the creative process. Like Isaiah, he also used repurposed objects, which he called ready-mades. One of Duchamp’s most famous pieces, Fountain is also referenced at PMG. Fountain is a repurposed urinal, and Duchamp placed it so that its functionality disappeared and created a new thought for that object. This is a great example of the type of works that Dada artists were creating and how they challenged the establishment. Toilet bowls have been repurposed at PMG, and this is one of the ways Zagar references Duchamp within the space.



In this lesson we will learn about Dadaism and understand Marcel Duchamp’s role in that art movement. We will learn about how Duchamp’s work inspired Zagar, and how recycling objects and using them in nontraditional ways is prevalent in both artists’ work.

Learning Objectives

- Reflect on their personal definitions of art.
- Understand the concepts behind Dadaist art and practice complex thinking in order to interpret the works.
- Brainstorm ideas for their sculptures and reflect on the definition of ready-mades.
- Create a readymade sculpture.
- Participate in a discussion and critique about your work.

Materials

- Computer(s) with access to the Internet
- Recycled/ reused objects collected by the students (bottles, boxes, shoes, furniture, cans, food containers, etc.)
- Acrylic Paint
- Paint Brushes
- Tape
- Glue/Adhesive
- Hot glue
- Paper
- Camera (optional)
- Magazines/ Newspapers
- Wire
- Scissors



Discussion Questions

- What is your definition of art?
- Would you consider ready-made sculpture to be art?
- Why is ready-made art controversial?
- What objects could be used to create a Dadaist sculpture?
- How would Dadaist artists assemble or present those objects?
- How do you think Dadaism has inspired Isaiah Zagar? What evidence is present at PMG to support this?
- How does Zagar's placement of objects change the meaning or purpose of those objects?
- What ideas or concepts would you like to address in your own project?

Key Vocabulary

Collage: A form of art that combines different materials (photographs, newspaper, etc.) onto paper or fabric.

***Dada:** An artistic and literary movement that grew out of dissatisfaction with traditional social values and conventional artistic practices during World War I (1914–18). Dada artists were disillusioned by the social values that led to the war and sought to expose accepted and often repressive conventions of order and logic by shocking people into self-awareness.

Modern Art: Artistic works produced from the 1860s to the 1970s, in which the traditional art mediums have been put aside and experimentation is the focus.

***Ready-made/Repurposed Objects:** A term coined by Marcel Duchamp in 1915 to describe prefabricated, often mass-produced objects isolated from their functional context and elevated to the status of art by the mere act of an artist's selection and designation

**Defined on MOMA website*

Activity

1. Introduce this project at least 1 week prior to the first day of construction by presenting Dadaism, Marcel Duchamp, and the key vocabulary. Cover the historical influences of the art movement, as well as the reasoning behind the art. Begin collecting objects that you will use in order to create 3D Dadaist sculptures. If you have not visited Philadelphia's Magic Gardens we recommend using our virtual tour to take a look.
2. Collect 3-5 objects, instruct them to begin sketching ideas for the use of the objects. Encourage the students to write out their ideas and words that will reflect the intent of their design.



3. Use language in the piece as Dadaists would have, create words and take away any meaning that the objects already have. This will help you decide on text that you might want to use and can help you write your final report.
4. As you begin brainstorming, note what additional resources or materials you might need.
5. Begin construction. Be sure to photograph the process.
6. Paint, draw, or collage on your sculptures with any form of media that you wish, but remember whatever objects you choose reflect a meaning.
7. Once you have constructed and photographed your pieces, write a 2-page report about your work and the reasoning behind your decisions.
8. Present your work and ideas in a critique.

Adaptations

This lesson can be adapted for younger students by having them use only one object, and only using one specific type of medium to alter the meaning of the object. This lesson can also include the concept of chance by having students randomly select objects or have others select objects for them. Instead of brainstorming words to associate with their sculptures could also randomly select them from a search engine.

PA Core Academic Standards

Arts & Humanities

Visual Arts 9.1.12.A, B, C, F, J, L

History

World History 8.4.12.A-D

Historical and Cultural Contexts 9.2.12. A, D, E, L

Critical Response 9.3.12. A, B, C, F

Aesthetic Response 9.4.12. A, D

Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening

Types of Writing 1.4.12.A, B

Quality of Writing 1.5.12.A-F

Resources

<http://www.marcel Duchamp.net/index.php>

<http://www.understandingDuchamp.com/>

http://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/dada

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONn_1pLb4oo

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqkIJ0odFxA>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeosT_6vG7g