

LESSON PLAN THREE

COLLAGE COLLEGE

In this lesson, students will become familiar with the basic ideas behind the Surrealist technique of collage. They will look at how several of Dalí's paintings incorporate collage and discuss why Surrealists would be attracted to collage in the first place. Then, in an activity taking up the majority of the class, they will not only have the opportunity to create collages of their own, but also the chance to display them in a "classroom museum" where they can discuss or write about the choices they made as artists.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Reproductions of: *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)*, *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*, and *The Hallucinogenic Toreador*.
- A stack of old magazines
- Paper or Posterboard
- Paste or glue; scissors

ACTIVITY

1. Short Reading & Response

Read the short passage that follows:

Have you ever cut pictures out of a magazine and glued them to a piece of paper? If so, you're already familiar with the art of collage. Collage is an artistic technique in which pieces of paper, cloth, and other objects are pasted onto a flat surface—indeed, the word "collage" comes from the French verb "coller" which means "to glue" or "to paste." Pablo Picasso created the first famous collage in 1912 when he glued a real piece of cloth onto his painting, and other artists, especially the Surrealists, took this idea and ran with it.

For the Surrealists, collage was a way of taking completely unlike objects or images and putting them together in the same piece of art to surprise and even shock—the same way that dreams can do. They liked to use three techniques: 1) **Juxtaposition** (putting two different things side by side that don't normally go together); 2) **Dislocation** (when objects are placed where they shouldn't be); and 3) **Transformation** (turning something familiar into something unusual and

disturbing). The Surrealists thought that making connections between the images might reveal the workings of the unconscious mind. At the very least, they argued, collage would make people think.

Now look at the artwork in front of the class—paintings that you should already recognize. Why might someone consider them collages? What could make them Surreal? Can you find any examples of juxtaposition, dislocation or transformation? Do these pictures make you think, as the Surrealists hoped they would? What do they make you think about?

2. Making a Collage

The Surrealists also liked collage because anyone can do it, and that meant more artists and more people thinking about why things go together the way they do—or why they don't go together. Your teacher has brought in some old magazines and newspapers for you to cut up and make into collages of your own Surreal world. But before you begin, you'll need to decide on a theme. Take a minute to write some notes for yourself on a piece of paper. Will your collage be psychological? Philosophical? Political? How about dreamlike? And remember, the Surrealists enjoyed using humor, so feel free to add in funny images. Keep in mind some of the techniques that help make something Surreal: **juxtaposition, dislocation, and transformation.**

Now go through the magazines and find images which you think symbolize your idea. Carefully cut them out and arrange them on the poster board or paper that your teacher has brought in—but don't glue the images down yet! Arrange and rearrange them until you find the proper balance, and when you do, *then* glue it all down.

3. Writing & Reflection (In-class or for homework)

Your teacher is about to turn your classroom into a museum—and your collage is going to be part of the exhibit! As you'll find out when you tour the Salvador Dalí Museum, however, art museums are more than just art. Most paintings are accompanied by one or two paragraphs of writing that discuss the work at hand and teach the museum's visitors about what they're looking at. Since your collage is on display, spend some time writing a couple of paragraphs that describe your work. What images did you choose and why? Why did you arrange them the way you did, and did you have a message you wanted to get across? Were you trying to surprise or shock? Did you try to use juxtaposition, dislocation or transformation? Did you cut out images that you ended up not using? Try to be as precise as possible—what you did might seem perfectly clear to you, but you're the artist! To someone else who doesn't know you, your work could be a total mystery.

Teachers! Try experimenting with this exercise to make it more complex and interesting for higher-level students. Have students bring in photos from home, or provide materials

for mixed-media collages and assemblages: cloth, buttons, sandpaper, nuts, bolts, other more three-dimensional materials, written text and poems, and possibly even leftover materials from shop or other studio art projects. You can even encourage students to collage their collages with other student work—which could subsequently provide opportunities for collaborative writing in the “Writing & Reflection” segment of this lesson.