

NARRATIVE ASSEMBLAGE PROJECT

Art 33A, Art 33B, Art 75 Sculpture – Michael McGinnis, Instructor

This project teaches you methods of working with found objects. You will be expected to gather materials for sharing. The goal will be for the class to produce work that integrates disparate materials in a formally strong and structurally sound manner. As with all assignments, these works must be presented in critique, and defended technically and aesthetically. Tools and machines will be introduced as necessary.

Content:

Your assemblage should be intensely personal and revealing. This does not mean it should be completely without secrets. A complex story needs mystery and depth. Metaphor, obscured imagery, symbols, and historical reference convey layers of meaning and emotion. A narrative is not necessarily literal.

Materials:

The assemblage concept allows for an almost unlimited list of material choices. However, practical considerations must be taken into account in order to accomplish this project in a given amount of time, space, tool availability, and skills. Common found materials include processed wood scraps, natural wood scraps, painted and rusted metal objects, fabric, furniture elements, architectural elements, premade boxes, worn picture frames, photographs, printed materials, toys, mechanical parts, old tools, musical instruments, acrylic house paint, personal objects, trinkets, ephemera, memorabilia, etc.

Connection methods:

Typical methods of materials attachment include-

- 1) Glues and adhesives- wood glue, white glue, hot glue, rubber cement, epoxy, construction adhesive, rice starch, wheat paste, caulks including acrylic and silicone based, soft wax
- 2) Nails- found rusted or worn nails, finish nails, decorative tacks, construction nails
- 3) Screws- found rusted or worn screws, machine screws with nuts, wood screws
- 4) soldering and welding (welding will not be accessible here)
- 5) Tying- with found and worn wire, rope, string, ribbon, jute, etc.
- 6) Dowelling and pegging
- 7) Hand cut joinery- mortise and tenon, finger joint, dado, dovetail

Dimensional Considerations:

Typically, assemblage pieces are small to medium-sized sculptures, although miniature and gigantic works are also possible. For the purposes of this assignment, beginning students will stick to table-top size to human scale. Intermediate and advanced students can create larger pieces. The difficulty in dealing with larger scale work is many-fold. How do you gather and deliver materials? Where can they be stored? How much outside of classtime is available to work on this project? How can large and heavy materials be secured or safely attached? How can the piece be moved?

Finish Quality:

The nature of assemblage allows for material surface irregularities. It is desirable to have rich textural variety, worn or broken elements, and wonky juxtapositions. It is NOT desirable to have loose parts, poor connections, unbalanced structure, bad glue joints, or wobbly construction. The work must be solidly assembled so that it can be safely handled.

Storage and Completion:

During the project timeframe, please keep materials and projects either in your locker, or on a designated shelf/storage location. No materials are to be left out when class is not in session. After completion, all unused materials must be dealt-with, either by sorting and storing for future classes, taken away, or discarded.

No materials are to be left behind unless allowed by the instructor. You and your classmates are responsible for your materials coming in and going out.

Terms below are found at http://www.askart.com/AskART/lists/Art_Definition.aspx?sl=A

NARRATIVE-

Art, which tells a story. Narrative Art is usually self-explanatory, being from either recognizable daily-life scenes or from familiar folk stories. It was prevalent during the Renaissance with stories from the Bible or the Classics. In the 19th Century, genre scenes became popular in America and often told a story such as a soldier leaving for war, etc. Modernist artists up to the 1960s avoided Narrative Art because they were more interested in abstraction or works with themes less easy to read. However, movements of the second half of the 20th Century such as Pop Art, Figurative, Calligraphic and Performance Art have reintroduced Narrative Art. Modern Narrative artists include Jerome Witkin, Roy Kerswill, and Faith Ringgold who inscribes messages on her painted quilts. Among 19th-Century narrative artists are John Quidor, James Hamilton, Edward Moran, John Chapman and Otis Bass. Sources: Robert Atkins, "Art Speak".

ASSEMBLAGE-

Description of three-dimensional work that is the counterpart of collage, which is two-dimensional. Assemblage is composed of non-art materials, often found objects, that are seemingly unrelated but create a unity. It originated with Pablo Picasso and George Braque and Cubism. In 1913, they made the first Assemblage, which was a sheet metal guitar. "Glass of Absinthe", completed in 1914 by Pablo Picasso is thought to be another early work of assemblage. Peter Selz and William Seitz, curators at the Museum of Modern Art, created the name "assemblage" in 1961 for an exhibition of objects they titled "The Art of Assemblage". American artists who did Assemblage sculpture include Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella, Louise Nevelson, Joseph Cornell, Edward Kienholz, Lee Bontecou, Escobar Marisol, Richard Stankiewicz, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Pierre Arman and Red Grooms. Sources: Ralph Mayer, "A Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques"; Robert Atkins, "Art Speak"; AskART database.

FOUND OBJECT-

From the French words "objet trouve", the term in art vocabulary applies to artwork created with objects that are found and then incorporated in artwork. The theory, from Surrealism, is that any object can become a work of art. Found Objects pre-exist unto themselves rather than being made as art mediums such as oil, bronze, etc. The use of Found Objects in art expression began in France in the early 20th century with Dadaists and Surrealists including Max Ernst and Marcel Duchamp. Their focus was to shift attention away from the physical act of creation. After World War II, artists used Found Objects for social messages such as commentary on a throw-away society. An example would be the use of mannequins by Edward Kienholz to symbolize a line-up of emotionless people. The use of Found Objects are usually regarded by the artist as aesthetically significant because they express personal meaning, which is the goal of the artwork. Sources: Robert Atkins, "Art Speak"; Source: Kimberley Reynolds and Richard Seddon, "Illustrated Dictionary of Art Terms"

Example artists as seen in lecture and at <http://www.santarosa.edu/~mmcginni/art33/Assemblage>

Historical

- 01 Joseph Cornell
- 02 Jasper Johns
- 03 Pablo Picasso
- 04 Robert Rauschenberg
- 05 Joan Miro
- 06 Louise Nevelson
- 07 George Fullard

Contemporary

- 08 Lisa Nordstrom
- 09 Lucas Samaras
- 10 Gerard Gambon
- 11 Ellen Rixford
- 12 unknown, various artists

Contemporary, continued

- 13 Bio Ephemera
- 14 Polly Becker
- 15 Jim Ridlon
- 16 Pablo Cano
- 17 Jeff Mathison
- 18 Barbara Irwin
- 19 Deborah Butterfield
- 20 Ann P. Smith

Local

- 21 Monty Monty
- 22 Aileen Cormack
- 23 Bryan Tedrick
- 24 Patrick Amiot