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# Assemblage Sculptures



**Grade:** 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Medium:** Sculpture

**Learning Objective:** Students will:  
 Observe assemblage sculptures by sculptor Louise Nevelson.  
 Use specific vocabulary to describe characteristics of her work.  
 Make a similar work of art employing the same characteristics.

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## Elements of Art

**Form:** a three-dimensional object that has height, length, width, and depth.

**Negative Space:** the empty space surrounding a shape, figure, or form in a two- or three-dimensional artwork.

**Positive Space:** the actual space taken up by the line, shape, or form.

## Principles of Design

**Balance:** the arrangement of elements that makes individual parts of a composition appear equally important; an arrangement of the elements to create an equal distribution of visual weight throughout the format or composition. If a composition appears top- or bottom-heavy and/or anchored by weight to one side, it is not visually balanced.

**Symmetrical/Asymmetrical Balance:** symmetry is having balance; exact appearance on opposite sides of a dividing line or plane. Asymmetry is the lack of exact balance. Artists use symmetry to create unity and asymmetry to create interest.

## Additional Vocabulary Words

**Sculpture:** a three-dimensional work of art.

**Assemblage:** a three-dimensional composition made by combining (assembling) a variety of objects, often found objects.

**Installation Art:** large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time. An installation usually allows the viewer to enter and move around the

configured space and/or interact with some of its elements. It offers the viewer a different experience a traditional painting or sculpture which is normally seen from a single reference point.

**Monochromatic:** use of a single hue to unify a work of art.

## **Materials & Supplies**

- Cardboard Box Lids – 12x12” or smaller.
- Scrap Wood – paintable (moldings are really interesting).
- Recycled Materials which are easily painted – clean plastic, old toys, yogurt containers, lids, small boxes, cardboard, game pieces, blocks, toilet paper tubes, puzzle pieces, popsicle sticks, ask around for donations a month or so before your project.
- Tacky Glue or hot glue guns with adult supervision.
- Latex Paint – one color, Louise used black, white or silver (look at hardware store to find miss-mixed or returned paint).
- Table Covering (newsprint or butcher paper).
- Flat 2” or larger paint brushes.
- Paint shirts – optional, large T-shirts to cover clothes as latex will stain.

## **Context (History and/or Artists)**

**Assemblage:** The term was first used in the visual arts during the 1950s when artist Jean DuBuffet created a series of collages of butterfly wings, which he called assemblages d'empreintes. Other well-known assemblage artists are Louise Nevelson, Joseph Cornell, John Chamberlain, and Marcel Duchamp.

**Louise Nevelson:** (1899-1988) Louise was born September 23, 1899 in Pereyaslav, Russia (now the Ukraine). Her family emigrated to the United States when she was very young. She is known for her sculptures using old furniture and other found materials. She frequently gathered supplies for these sculptures from urban debris found on the streets of New York. Her unique materials were often arranged in wooden boxes or frames and then painted monochromatic black, white or gold. Louise was one of the first women to create sculptures on a large scale and paved the way for many women artists after her. She was also a groundbreaking artist of installation art. She experimented with Plexiglas, aluminum, steel and many other materials, creating art well into her eighties.

## **Advanced Preparation**

Have the students gather recycled and found objects for the month leading up to this lesson (provide a list of suggested items).

Prepare a short slide show containing examples of Nevelson's & other assemblage artist's work.

If possible, have a finished example of this lesson to show students.

Try to have the lesson split, half before recess/specialist and half after. This will give time for the glue to dry.

## **Tips & Tricks**

- The larger the box lids, the more recycled and found objects will be needed to fill them.
- Larger box lids will take longer to create than smaller box lids.
- When the finished student sculptures are displayed together, they create a powerful visual impact.

## **Discussion Points**

- What is assemblage?
- Why would an artist create art from recycled or unwanted materials? (Cost, available, interesting shapes, color, shapes, wanting to make a statement?)
- Discuss symmetry & asymmetry's role in sculpture. It can unify or create interest. If it is a stand-alone sculpture, it needs to balance to stand up.
- Why use a monochromatic pallet? (Unifying lots of shapes, colors & textures.)
- How can depth be created in your sculpture?
- How can you use positive & negative space to create interest?

## **Instructions for Lesson**

1. Write Elements, Principles & vocabulary on the board with definitions.
2. Show examples of some of Louise Nevelson's artwork (search for titles such as *Black Wall*, *Lunar Landscape*, *Sky Cathedral* and many more).
3. Talk about Louise Nevelson and assemblage.
  - a. Study the forms you see in her work.
  - b. How did she create depth?
  - c. How does her work show us balance?
  - d. Talk through discussion points.
4. Demonstrate writing your name on the back of the box and arranging materials inside. Talk about why you are doing what you are doing.
5. Have the students write their names on the back of each box.
6. Choose objects and organize them in their box to create balanced forms and depth.
7. Once they have finished their piece, have them start gluing. Remove pieces and glue them to the box and build up pieces working from top to bottom or side to side so they don't lose their design.
8. Allow the glue to dry.
9. Set up to paint as a whole class or at one table if working with small groups. Cover your tables and give each kids a small container with the latex paint.
10. Paint boxes and interior all the same color. Louise Nevelson used neutral colors. But you or your class can choose what works for them.
11. Install on a wall, stacked on top of each other.

## **Reflection Point (Assessment of Learning Objectives)**

Did the student create an individual assemblage sculpture with recycled materials?

Did they consider balance and form in their design?

**Examples:**





### **References and Attributions:**

First three project examples from Clark elementary, 2017. Installation art – Art Term. Retrieved March 28, 2018, from <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/installation-art>. Installation Art. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2018, from <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/installation-art.htm>. Louise Nevelson. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2018, from <https://www.pacegallery.com/artists/327/louise-nevelson>.

### **Notes for Educators**

#### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Skills**

Thinking flexibly, persisting, questioning, creating, innovation, taking responsible risks, goal setting, observing, reflecting, making connections, visualizing, predicting, comparing/contrasting, determining main idea, finding evidence, problem solving, cause & effect, decision making, evaluating.

#### **WA State Learning Standards:**

(VA:Cr1.1.5) a. Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making. This happens when students collect found objects.

(VA:Cr1.2.5) a. Identify and demonstrate diverse methods of artistic investigation to choose an approach for beginning a work of art. This happens when assemblages are observed and created.

(VA:Cr2.3.5) a. Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance. This happens if students include personally significant objects in their art.

(VA:Pr6.1.5) a. Cite evidence about how an exhibition in a museum or other venue presents ideas and provides information about a specific concept or topic. This happens when the concept of art installations is presented.

(VA:Re7.1.5) a. Compare one's own interpretation of a work of art with the interpretation of others. This happens when students see a display of their and their peers work.

(VA:Re8.1.5) a. Interpret art by analyzing characteristics of form and structure, contextual information, subject matter, visual elements, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

(VA:Cn10.1.5) a. Apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design to view surroundings in new ways through art-making. This happens when vocabulary words are introduced.