

**FAMOUS ARTIST SERIES:
ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG (1925-2008)**

Supplies Needed:

ART BIN:

- Project examples of collage art
- White card stock cut into 8.5"x5.5" pieces (half-sheets), 1 per student
- Colored, printed, and textured papers, fabric scraps, wrapping paper scraps, tissue paper, foil
- Newspapers and magazines (Please check our supply and bring more from home if necessary. *Plenty of magazines for this project are also in the CFA Supply Room.*)
- Sharp scissors (for cutting fabric) and bottled glue (for gluing fabric)

OTHER:

- Glue sticks, markers, crayons, scissors (from classroom supplies)

AHEAD OF TIME NOTES:

- 📌 ***This art project can be time-consuming. Try to allow as much time for it as possible. Requesting a minimum of one hour of class time is best for this presentation. The art project alone will probably take students between 30 and 40 minutes to complete.***

PRESENTATION

Present - Retroactive I, 1959:

- This painting is called “Retroactive I.” It was created by modern American artist Robert Rauschenberg (ROU-shun-burg) in 1959. What do you notice about this artwork? Is it a painting? Notice that there are photographs combined with other elements. Rauschenberg is famous for combining many different media in his work.

Present - Photograph of Robert Rauschenberg:

- Milton Earnest Rauschenberg was born in Port Arthur, Texas in 1925. (He later renamed himself “Robert” as an adult.) When he was a young man, he thought he would become a minister or a pharmacist. He had no idea he would become one of the most prolific American artists ever. What does *prolific* mean? It’s a word that refers to someone who produces a great number of works of art.
- Rauschenberg developed his drawing skills while serving in the Marines, and then studied art in Paris, France for a year. He moved back to the United States in his early twenties, and began making a name for himself as a painter. Pop art excited him. He liked the idea of painting “pop”ular items in new ways. Which other pop artists have we learned about? (Warhol, Haring, Oldenburg, Thiebaud, Lichtenstein)
- In the 1960s, Rauschenberg experimented with different types of painting and developed a method that he liked. He incorporated materials that artists didn’t typically use into his artwork. For example, for his abstract paintings, he used house paint from the hardware store to cover a canvas. Or he would put ink on a car tire and run it over paper. One of his drawings was called “Erased de Kooning.” It was a drawing Rauschenberg was given by artist Willem de Kooning, but then erased!
- After experimenting with many different types of alternative art, Rauschenberg settled on creating a new type of artwork he called “combines.” Combines, by Rauschenberg’s definition, were made by finding materials and using them to form a collage. What is a *collage*? A collage is typically a form of art in which materials such as photographs, paper, or fabric are arranged and stuck to a backing.

Present- Monogram, 1959:

- This is one of Rauschenberg’s first and most famous combines. It is a three-dimensional collage. What types of materials did he use to create this three-dimensional combine? (a stuffed goat, a tennis ball, a police barrier, a tire, the heel of a shoe, and paint) Through “Monogram,” Rauschenberg took modern art in a new direction. Combining objects and images became his artistic “signature.”
- Rauschenberg once said, *“I really feel sorry for people who think things like soap dishes or mirrors or Coke bottles are ugly because they’re surrounded by things like that all day long. It must make them miserable.”* Have you ever seen or created art out of everyday objects? Many artists today are repurposing everyday discarded objects to give them a new life in earth-friendly art.

Present- First Landing Jump, 1961:

Present - Odalisk, 1955-1958:

- In “First Landing Jump,” Rauschenberg features a tire, a wooden barricade, a license plate, a light, leather, metal, cable, and oil paint. In “Odalisk,” he uses photographs, blueprints, newspaper, metal, glass, grass, a pillow, a wooden post, lamps, and a stuffed rooster. What types

of art supplies do you think Rauschenberg used in “Odalisk?” (oil paint, watercolor, crayon, pastels)

Present - [Retroactive I, 1959:](#)

Present - [Buffalo II, 1964:](#)

- During the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the Pop Art movement really took off, Rauschenberg began creating two-dimensional combines, which were more like the collages you may have seen or made.
- In his two-dimensional combines, Rauschenberg often used magazine photographs of famous events and people to create silk screen prints. A silk screen is a stencil method of printmaking in which a design is imposed on a screen of silk or other fine mesh material, with blank areas coated with an impenetrable substance. Ink is forced through the mesh onto the printing surface with a roller. Rauschenberg screened the images directly onto a canvas.
- What famous events or images are represented in these collages? (John F. Kennedy, a political figure and president of the United States in the 1960s; space exploration; patriotic images like the bald eagle) Through his artwork, Rauschenberg commented on current events in the world. These collages show that he was inspired by America’s efforts to send an astronaut to the moon. He was also interested in flight and flying.

Present- [Estate, 1963:](#)

Present- [Rebus, 1955:](#)

- Take a close look at these two collages. These works and “Retroactive I” (framed) will serve as examples for the art project we will be doing today.

Present - [Copperhead Grande, 1985:](#)

Present - [Copperhead Chica, 1985:](#)

- These two collages were printed on copper, and reveal Rauschenberg’s fascination with silk screening on unusual materials. They were inspired by the time Rauschenberg spent in the South American country of Chile.

Present - [Pelican:](#)

- Rauschenberg’s interest in a variety of art forms extended into the world of dance and music. In the 1950s, he began designing costumes for a variety of shows. In 1963, Rauschenberg choreographed a piece called “Pelican.” He performed in “Pelican” himself wearing roller skates, a parachute, and a helmet he designed.

Present - [Dancer in front of Rauschenberg’s set backdrop:](#)

- Rauschenberg also designed set backdrops for dance performances. Here you see dancers performing in front of a backdrop collage created by Rauschenberg.

Robert Rauschenberg spent his life working as a photographer, painter, printmaker, choreographer, and set designer. He was a very generous person, and donated much of his large income to charities. Rauschenberg died in 2008 at the age of 82.

Suggested Project

Today we are going to make a collage (or “combine”) in the style of Robert Rauschenberg. We will use images and words from newspapers and magazines, textured and printed paper and fabric, and paint, markers, and crayons.

Rauschenberg commented on current events in the world through his artwork. Your goal today is to create a two-dimensional collage about some type of theme, current event, or issue. Here are a few ideas: *politics, the presidency, animal rights, recycling, being eco-friendly, pollution, civil rights, peace or war, gender equality, and voting*. You don’t have to choose to comment on one of these issues, but they may help you brainstorm other themes for your collage.

- Arrange the collage materials on a central table or desk so students can see what is available for them to use.
- Show the college examples. Provide each student with a half-sheet of white cardstock. This will serve as the “canvas” for their collage.
- Have students scan newspapers and magazines for words and images they would like to use in their collage. Students can also draw or cut shapes out of paper.
- Encourage students to create a collage by gluing images and pieces of colored or textured paper, fabric, and foil to their canvas using their glue sticks. (There are also bottles of liquid glue and sharper scissors for cutting fabric in the art box.) Please monitor students’ usage of metallic and print papers, as they are expensive.
- Rauschenberg had a tendency to layer images and materials. He also often added texture to his combines by crumpling up his materials before attaching them to the canvas. Encourage students to leave space on their canvas for crayon, pencil, or marker additions and embellishments.
- Once paper and fabric elements are glued down, invite students to use markers, or crayons to complete and add detail to their collage.
- Allow the colleges to dry flat overnight.
- **PLEASE HAVE STUDENTS KEEP MOST FABRIC AND PAPER SCRAPS UNLESS THEY ARE VERY SMALL. THESE PIECES OF PAPER AND FABRIC CAN BE USED FOR OTHER COLLEGES.**

IF TIME PERMITS ALLOW STUDENTS TO SHOW/DISCUSS THEIR WORK.