

# Rock and Roll

**Melissa Verdier**

One of the challenges we face as art teachers is getting our students to relate to their artwork on a personal level. No problem here! When a discussion of amusement parks begins, everyone seems to have a story to tell.

After viewing a PBS NOVA program called *Roller Coaster!* on our local public broadcasting station some time ago, I was excited to try a unique way to introduce facial and body expressions in a drawing

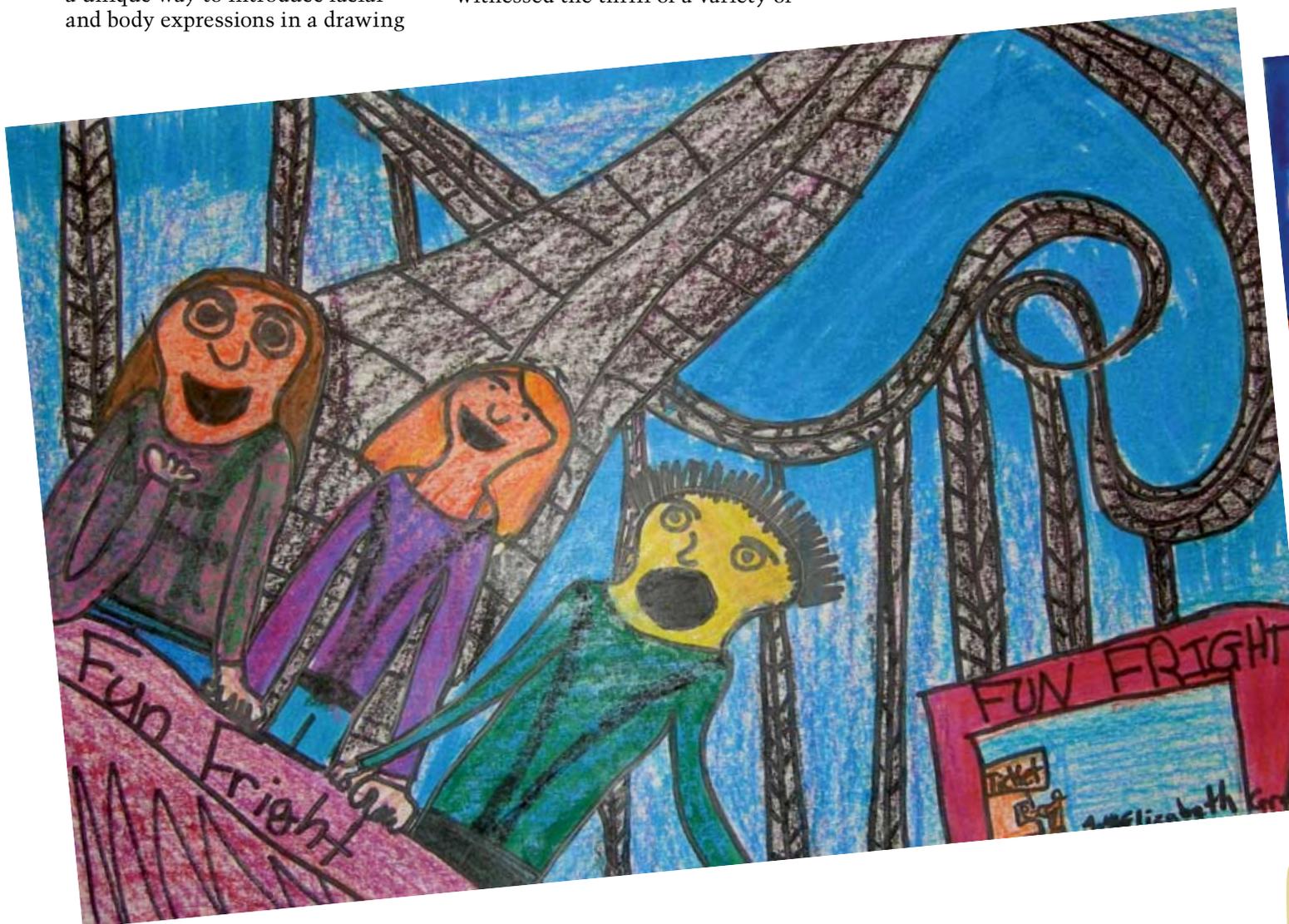
project, while painlessly incorporating science and art history into one unit. The video, *Roller Coaster!*, is produced by WGBH, and is available for purchase. Magazines and newspaper photos of amusement parks and thrill rides can also be used as motivation for this project.

## Session One

In session one, my fourth-grade classes watched the first seventeen minutes of the NOVA video. They witnessed the thrill of a variety of

ultimate scream machines, learned how a former rocket scientist designed several roller coasters for theme parks around the country, and had the concepts of friction and centrifugal force explained in an entertaining and understandable way.

We discussed how to make the coaster appear near or far away, how large to make the figures and faces, and how many people to include. Students were encouraged to ask questions about the type of rides that could be featured. They began with a preliminary pencil sketch



on 12 x 16" (30 x 41 cm) newsprint, taking care to depict interesting views of people's faces, arms, and body positions. If people were to be viewed upside down, students learned that it was easier to draw their people right side up and then turn the paper around. Students also practiced lettering the name of their ride.

### Session Two

In the second session, the video was played again, without sound this time, allowing students to focus on patterns created within the roller coaster structures and how to include interestingly placed background objects. When the sketches were ready to be placed on white paper, students

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took turns at the "light box" (classroom windows) and transferred their drawings. Once the final pencil drawing was complete, students outlined them with black permanent markers. Students were then encouraged to add color with crayons, oil pastels, and/or metallic markers (for highlighting fireworks and special effects).

Time was also set aside to view and discuss artworks from different cultures and eras depicting entertainment. Works discussed included

*Baseball Players* by Elaine de Kooning, *La Piñata* by Diego Rivera, *The East*

*River* by Maurice Prendergast, and *Children's Games* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

When the project was completed, each student filled out an assessment using a simple scale to clarify which art principles were used and score originality in composition. I also asked students to include a written description of an experience they had at an amusement park. 🎡

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### NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.*

### WEB LINK

[shop.wgbh.org/product/show/8356](http://shop.wgbh.org/product/show/8356)

