

REcycle, REuse, We Aim to Amuse

Juliette Montague

In anticipation of teaching a lesson on recycling in the spring, I asked students to start bringing in empty laundry, bleach, and juice containers from the beginning of the year. The photography teacher saved me all of her students' film canisters throughout the year and I added additional landfill-headed items such as wire, CDs, and other odds and ends. Students would eventually use these

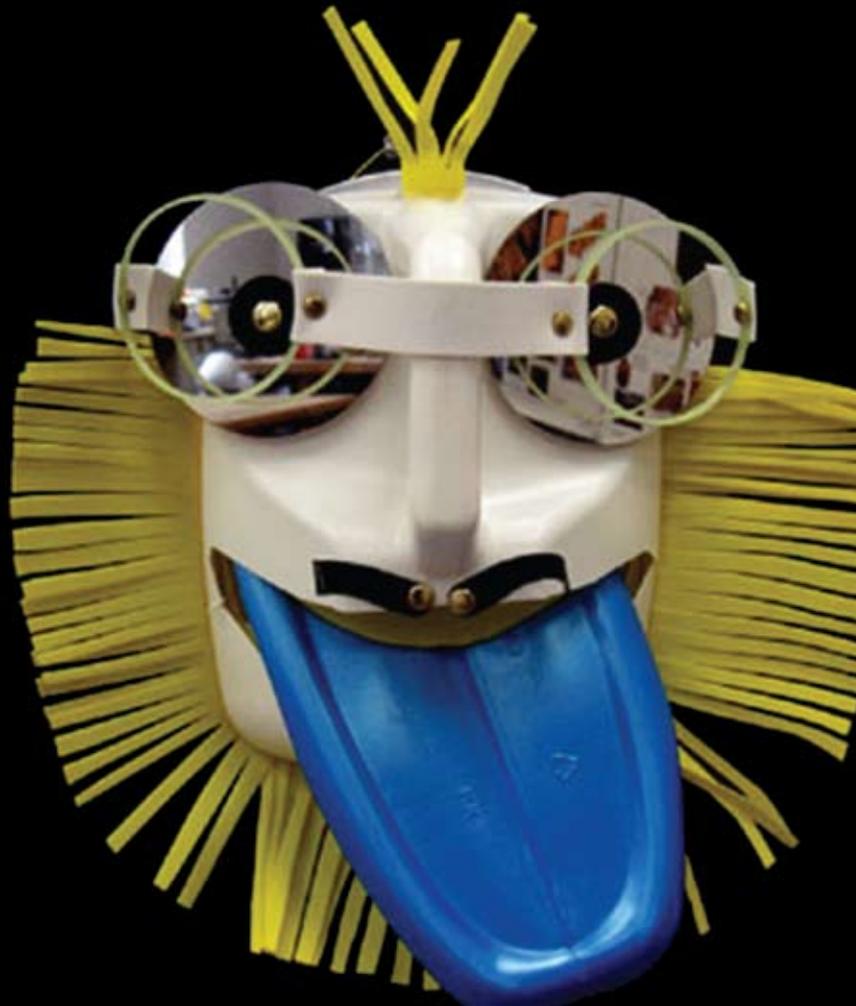
materials to build masks. I did not want students to use any adhesives to put their creations together, so I also collected a variety of sizes of metal brads for students to use.

"Junk" as Media

I introduced this lesson by showing and discussing work created by artists throughout history who use recyclables for their media. I showed

students examples from a wide variety of folk artists, fine artists, and furniture designers, and architects. I also showed them several wonderful websites that feature inventive, creative people, and businesses that are reusing a variety of materials. I encouraged students to explore more about the topic on their own.

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rials did not look like “junk.” Instead, the results were amazing and intriguing artworks. We discussed how artists come up with ideas for their work, and how important it is to brainstorm and try out different ideas and configurations in order to come up with the best possible solution to an art problem.

Mask Making

Students began their projects by each choosing a container that would be the basis for a mask. Next, they looked through the available materials and played around with the possibilities. They also drew in their sketchbooks.

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After this initial brainstorming, students got to work creating their masks. I witnessed many “aha” moments as they ventured into the zone of creative problem-solving. They

were creative in their own work and in helping others figure out the best way to create something. The energy in the room was palpable.

Each student’s creation was successful. The creative problem-solving evident in the work resulted in amazing and amusing works of art. This lesson was a great way to encourage students to look at the garbage in our

society and find ways to repurpose it into artwork. At the end of the year, my students told me that this was one of their favorite lessons. 🌀

Juliette Montague is an art teacher who lives in Worthington, Ohio.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.

WEB LINK

1800recycling.com/2010/09/thirteen-recycled-steampunk-gas-masks
www.pitchengine.com/johntunger/new-faces-masks-handcut-from-recycled-shovel-blades/18710