



Dada, Artist Trading Card
by Craig Roland.

Looking for something new for your curriculum this year? Artist trading cards (ATCs) may be just the ticket. ATCs are a rather new art form that began in Europe in 1996 and have since spread around the world with the help of the Internet. ATCs can provide your students with more choice in terms of media and subject matter, and can also reinvigorate your own artistic practice.

What Are ATCs?

Simply put, artist trading cards are miniature works of art that are traded between artists. They can be about anything and made with any media, materials, or techniques. They can be produced as one-of-a-kind originals, in limited editions, or in a series based on a particular theme or subject. It's all up to the individual artist.

While the artistic freedom of artist trading cards is perhaps their most attractive feature, there are some simple rules you need to follow. See previous page for details.

ATC Materials and Media

ATCs can be made with markers, watercolors, rubber stamps, pattern papers, old photographs, newspaper clippings, stickers, digital images, found items like tickets or stamps. The more varied materials and media you can offer students, the better. Joumana Medlej's excellent primer on ATCs at

Artist Trading Cards

Resources on the Web

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www.cedarseed.com/air/atc.html offers lots of techniques and ideas to try on your own or with students.

Many ATC artists use photo-transfer methods to add images which have been photocopied or printed on an ink-jet or laser printer. Instructions for doing photo transfers can be found in many craft magazines and at www.liq-uitex.com/techniques/transfer.cfm.

While ATCs are usually made on a card stock base, they don't have to be. You can also use foam board, canvas, watercolor paper, discarded greeting cards, cereal box cardboard primed with gesso, and many other materials.

ATC Themes

ATC Swaps are sometimes organized around a theme. When doing ATCs with students, you can let them decide on their own theme or you can present them with a theme or art problem to solve like:

- Make a card that pays homage to an artist or musician you admire.
- Create a series of four cards that relate to a particular art element or principle.
- Create a card using images and text that give a sense of a particular time or place in history.

For more ATC themes and ideas, visit the Art-e-zine's Artist Trading Cards page at www.art-e-zine.co.uk/atc.html.

Trading ATCs

Trading is essential to the ATC process. Many ATC enthusiasts use the Internet to display their cards and to locate others willing to trade cards by snail mail. The Artist Trading Cards Group on Yahoo! (groups.yahoo.com/group/ArtTradingCards), for example, has over 630 members. However, organized face-to-face ATC swaps are the preferred means of meeting other artists and trading cards. For example, the organization HiNgE (atc.hingeonline.com) stages regular ATC sessions in the Philadelphia area. By typing in your zip code on Artist Trading Cards Meetup (artisttradingcards.meetup.com), you can see if there is an ATC group that meets in your area, or start one on your own.

ATCs in the Classroom

For a picture of the possibilities of introducing ATCs in your art curriculum, visit the Union City Arts Education (PA) Web site at www.ucarts.com/atc.htm. Also visit ATCs in the classroom (www.artjunction.org/atcs) where you can discuss ATCs with other teachers, arrange ATC swaps with other schools, and exhibit your own ATCs or those created by your students. ☺

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