

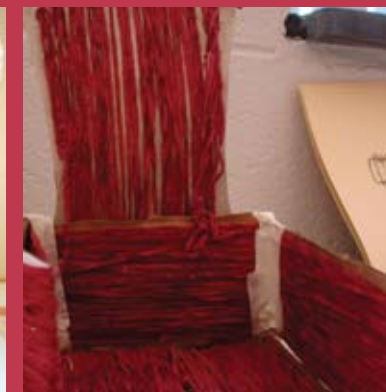
Please Take a Seat

Martha Savage



It is a tall order to synthesize ideas from many sources, but it is possible for every student.

Left to Right: Student work, Apple Scoop Chair, Toast Chair, Upholstered Chair. Below: Hockey Puck Chair. Bottom Left: Laptop Chair.



experience. There are abundant challenges transforming two-dimensions to three-dimensions.

Each chair is prepared for exhibit by placing it in a corner of a room model or gluing it to a cardboard stand.

A chair inspired by a mountain is humorously titled *Mount Everseat*. Chairs range from a laptop-informed model, candy bar-inspired lounger, graffiti-derived chaise, to a bench with shapes echoing a cartoon icon and a fried-egg scoop chair with bacon ottoman. Some, such as a toaster-inspired chair, are mechanical.

Other Responses

When asked to reflect on work style and revisions, one student responded, "I would try to do a lot in one day and fix it up in others." On inspiration and imagination, another student said, "I learned that you could take almost any type of object and turn it into a chair." Talking about failure, a student reflected, "I learned: when you start something and it goes wrong, don't give up from just a little mistake, keep going and you will succeed."

I find student interpretations of the assignment are important to my own reflective process. I learn that building a three-dimensional model is very challenging and requires some technical skills and understanding of materials. The sketchbooks demonstrate that looking at examples and playing around with ideas is important. The variety of ideas shows the importance of imagination and the role of personal interests. It is a tall order to synthesize ideas from many sources, but it is possible for every student. 🌀

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their ideas.

WEB LINKS

www.designboom.com/london03/index.html



The chair is an appealing object for a sixth grade exploration into design. It is easy to empathize with a chair. It is anthropomorphic. It has legs, feet, arms, personality, culture, and history. Many modern and contemporary chairs are playful, and humor and whimsy are valued in middle school.

Everyone has experience with chairs of differing purposes from high-chairs, to school chairs, to favorite chairs. Our inquiry begins with laminated pictures of modern and contemporary chairs found on the Internet and shared with students.

2-D Chair Drawings

The first assignment is to draw one of the examples in a sketchbook, speculate on what material it is made from, the chair's name, and where the

designer may have found inspiration. This is repeated four to five times.

Many contemporary chairs are made using processes and materials new to the market such as plastics in bright colors and geometric and undulating shapes. These chairs are sometimes suggestive of other objects such as an egg, orange peel, or water conduit. Some students recognize one of the chairs from an Austin Powers movie.

Exploring Materials

The next step is to observe and explore the characteristics of materials. Small specimens such as a twig, leaf, plastic, metal, wire, shell, netting, candy,

rock, and cardboard are examined closely and carefully drawn in the

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sketchbook. Observations made from the chair images and materials are combined into sketchbook drawings that help students form ideas for original chair designs. Each idea is accompanied with a name and origin of inspiration.

Modeling a Chair

Finally, students set about making small models of their chair ideas, using materials and tools such as Mylar, paper cups, straws, colored paper, paper crimpers, and shaped punches. Students' progress is influenced not only by the progress of their classmates, but also by personal



Assessment

Students reflect on their projects by writing answers to these questions:

- What were you trying to accomplish?
- Did you need more time?
- How did you decide on materials?
- How did the teacher help?
- What did you learn?
- What would you do differently in a similar project?