

Janice Mason Art Museum
LESSON PLANS FOR WIER EXHIBIT
Background Information

ARTIST NAME : Robert Rauschenberg

ART PIECE(S) ON DISPLAY: “Booster”, “Drizzle”, and “Tides”

About the Artist

Robert Rauschenberg was born on October 22, 1925 in Port Arthur, Texas. About his youth, Rauschenberg says, “I was considered slow. While my classmates were reading their textbooks, I drew in the margins.” In the school play he forgot his lines. According to the artist, the only thing he “could do was dance.” And dancing was not allowed in his religious family. Rauschenberg has dyslexia, a reading disability, which made school very difficult for him. At church, he was often punished for laughing. One rainy day when he was 10, he painted his bedroom red. For that, too, he was punished. Though Rauschenberg had difficulty reading he likes to put words into his artwork. He often misspells them. He likes word games because he can read words forward and backwards.

At first Rauschenberg imagined himself a minister and later a pharmacist. In 1942 he briefly studied pharmacy at the University of Texas, and then was drafted into the Marines. Rauschenberg did not see his first real painting until he was 19. He discovered an aptitude for drawing as he drew [portraits](#) of fellow Marines for them to send home. At this point, Rauschenberg did not realize that making money as an artist “was something you could do”.

After leaving the Marines, he studied art in Paris on the G.I. bill, but quickly became disenchanted with the European art scene. After less than a year in Paris, he moved to Black Mountain, North Carolina, where some of the country’s most visionary artists and thinkers, such as Joseph Albers and Buckminster Fuller, were teaching at Black Mountain College. He left North Carolina and moved to New York in 1949 and studied at the Students’ Art League until 1952. He had his first one-man exhibition in 1951. In 1955 he moved into the same neighborhood as Jasper Johns. The two artists had neighboring studios and regularly discussed their art and new ideas. Robert’s rejection of [Abstract Expressionism](#) led him to search for a new way of painting. Wherever he went, he met musicians and dancers and other artists. He and his friends wanted to unite their interests to create new ideas. One morning Rauschenberg wanted to paint, but had no money for canvas. He took his own pillow and quilt, covered them with paint, toothpaste, and fingernail polish and framed his creation. After that experience he continued producing artworks that he called “[combines](#)” and cemented his place in art history.

Rauschenberg traveled and exhibited world wide. Since 1984, he has headed the Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Exchange, which supports the cooperation of artists around the globe. To begin this project, he traveled to 11 different countries to learn about their art and to exhibit his own . These travels influenced Rauschenberg’s art because he used materials, images and objects from them in his own work.

About the Art

Together with fellow artist Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg started the American art movement known as **Pop Art**. Through the 50's and 60's Rauschenberg developed and expanded his "combines". A term he coined for his well-known works that integrated aspects of painting and sculpture, and would often include "found" items such as street signs, a stuffed goat, newspapers and dirt. In the 60's he also began using the commercial medium of **photoscreen**, which included the techniques of **silkscreen** and **lithography**. The artist screened in art reproductions, images from newspapers, and anonymous **photographs** of city scenes. Throughout the 60's and 70's he expanded this experimentation in **prints** by printing onto aluminum, moving plexiglass, disks, clothes and other surfaces. He also created **performance pieces** centered around chance. For example, "Pelican" in 1963, involved dancers on roller-skates. During the 80's and 90's he continued concentrating primarily on **collages** and new ways to transfer **photographs**.

This exhibit contains three pieces by Rauschenberg. "Booster" was completed in 1967, and at the time of its execution was the largest **lithograph** ever printed on a hand-operated **lithograph press**. It was also the first **print** to use multiple techniques of **lithography** and **silkscreen** on mould made paper. An x-ray photograph of Rauschenberg's body is the central image. For this life-sized self-portrait Rauschenberg took himself off to the Kaiser Medical Group where he had himself x-rayed in the nude, except for a pair of large boots. This x-ray became the key element for the print. Photographic elements, the artist's drawing and some rubbings helped to complete the image. A **photographic contact print** was made of the separate x-rays. A half-tone negative was made and put onto **photo-lithography plates**. Additional work in **touche`** and **crayon** was done directly on the **lithography stone**. Other images (astrological chart) were printed later. "Booster became a key stepping stone in the history of postwar American printmaking, where limits to imagination and scale were discarded. It remains one of the most significant prints made in the twentieth century, helping to bring printmaking into a new era in which prints were to rival paintings in invention and size. This piece measures h 72" X w 35 1/2".

"Drizzle" is a **lithograph** with **embossing**. This was the first **lithograph** using direct transfers of images from magazines to the **lithography stone**. The transfers were accomplished by brushing images with solvent (lithotine, turpentine, or lighter fluid), placing them on the **stone** and then passing the **stone** through the press. The soft quality is accentuated by the somber cool colors. The **embossed** watch acts as a counterbalance. This **lithograph** was completed in 1967 and measures h 53 1/2" X 30 7/8".

"Tides" was completed in 1969. This **lithograph** was the first made from photo-sensitive **stones**. **Stones** were coated with photosensitive **emulsion**, then a **collage** of Rauschenberg's own photographs were placed on the **stone**. The **emulsions** were exposed through an ultraviolet quartz-iodine lamp. Then the **emulsion** was developed, and the **stones** were **etched**, processed, proofed and printed in the normal manner. The title was chosen because the **moire`** pattern suggested an appearance of reflections in water.

Related Terms

Abstract Expressionism
collage
combines
crayon
emulsion
etched
lithograph press
lithography
lithography stone
moire`
performance piece
photo lithography plate
photo screen
photo sensitive stones
photograph
photographic contact print
Pop Art
portrait
print
printing
sculpture
silkscreen
tusche`

Specific Lesson Plans

Grades K-5

Kentucky Core Content

AH-E-4.1.32 Art elements-line, shape, form, texture, and color (primary and secondary hues) and color groups (warm, cool, neutral).

AH-E-4.1.33 Principles of design- organization of visual compositions: emphasis (focal point), pattern, balance (symmetry), contrast (light/dark).

AH-E-4.1.34 Describe a variety of media and processes used to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.1.42 Use a variety of media and art processes to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.31 Identify various purposes for creating works of art.

AH-E-4.2.32 Purposes of Art- expressive (express emotions and ideas), narrative (describe and illustrate experiences), functional (decorate objects).

Objectives

- To learn that Robert Rauschenberg is considered by many critics as America's most influential and innovative artist despite his early problems in school and at home which were probably impacted by his dyslexia.
- To understand that Robert Rauschenberg did not realize he had an aptitude for art until he was in the Marines.
- To realize the Robert Rauschenberg went to several different schools in order to learn how to be an artist.
- To know that Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg were friends and together founded the [Pop Art](#) movement.
- To understand that Rauschenberg created [combines](#) mainly in the 50's and 60's and that they cemented his place in art history.
- To know that Rauschenberg has always been friends with dancers and musicians and participated in their art.
- To learn that Rauschenberg has used many techniques and materials in new ways in the development of his art. These include [lithography](#), [printing](#) onto aluminum, moving plexiglass disks, clothes and other surfaces, [performance pieces](#), [collages](#) and new ways to transfer photographs.
- To understand why his work entitled "Booster" is one of the most significant prints made in the twentieth century.

Suggested Questions

1. Describe Rauschenberg's learning problems, school problems, and family problems when he was a youth.
2. Tell how Rauschenberg first discovered he had art ability.
3. How did Rauschenberg go about securing skills and training in art?
4. Explain about Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns being friends.
5. What are **combines**?
6. Describe the first **combine** Rauschenberg made.
7. How did the creation of **combines** assure Rauschenberg a place in art history?
8. Describe the relationship that Rauschenberg has had with musicians and dancers throughout his art career.
9. Name some of the new techniques or materials Rauschenberg has given to the art world.
10. Why is his work "Booster" considered one of the most significant pieces of art of the twentieth century?

Related Activities

1. Have students bring different objects from home. Have them design and make a **combine** using these different materials. Have students discuss what they like and do not like about their own **combines**.
2. Show students the pictures of two of Rauschenberg's **combines**. Have each one select a **combine** and list the items used in making the **sculpture**. Have them explain why they do or do not like the **combine**.
3. Make a picture utilizing pictures from magazines, paint, drawing, and possibly a stamp. How similar can you make your picture to one of Rauschenberg's artworks? Point out the similarities and differences.
4. Have students look up information about Rauschenberg's life on the internet or library. Have them report on this by written or verbal reports, a poster, a demonstration of some aspect of his art, a skit, a play, or a timeline of his life showing the different phases he has evolved through in his art.

Grades 6-8

Kentucky Core Content

AH-M-4.1.34 Identify and describe a variety of art media, art processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and stories.

AH-M-4.1.35 Media: two dimensional-crayon, pencil, fabric, yarn, paint (tempera, watercolor), ink and pastels.

AH-M-4.1.36 Media: three-dimensional-clay, paper-mache', found objects (used to produce artwork), wood, glass, metal, and stone (Properties of media need to be known in order to respond to artworks).

AH-M-4.1.39 Subject Matter: landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective.

AH-M-4.1.42 Effectively use a variety of art media, processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences.

AH-M-4.1.37 Art Processes: two-dimensional-painting, fabric design, printmaking, and mosaics.

AH-M-4.2.31 Describe and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods, artists, and/or styles.

Objectives

- To learn that Robert Rauschenberg is considered by many critics as America's most influential and innovative artist despite his early problems in school and at home which were probably impacted by his dyslexia.
- To understand that Robert Rauschenberg did not realize he had an aptitude for art until he was in the Marines.
- To realize the Robert Rauschenberg went to several different schools in order to learn how to be an artist.
- To know that Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg were friends and together founded the **Pop** Art movement.
- To learn that Robert Rauschenberg rejected **Abstract Expressionism** and founded new ways of painting.
- To understand that Rauschenberg created **combines** mainly in the 50's and 60's and that they cemented his place in art history.
- To be able to describe the first **combine** Rauschenberg made.
- To understand the function and importance of the Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Exchange.
- To learn that Rauschenberg uses many techniques and materials in new ways in the art world. These include **silkscreen, lithography; printing** onto aluminum, moving plexiglass disks, clothes and other surfaces; **performance pieces, collages** and new ways to transfer **photographs and photoscreens**.

- To understand why his work entitled “Booster” is one of the most significant [prints](#) made in the twentieth century.
- To know that his work entitled “Drizzle” has significance and why this is true.
- To realize that his work entitled “Tides” is the first [lithograph](#) made from [photo-sensitive stones](#).
- To fully appreciate that Rauschenberg has created many works of art that are creative and innovative.

Suggested Questions

1. What were some of the difficulties Robert Rauschenberg experienced as a child?
2. What showed Robert Rauschenberg that he had an aptitude for art?
3. What steps did Rauschenberg take to gain education in the art field?
4. How was the work of Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg similar?
5. What is the [Pop](#) art movement? Who founded it?
6. What is [Abstract Expressionism](#)? Why do you think Rauschenberg rejected this movement?
7. What is a [combine](#), who first utilized this technique in art, and what effect did it have on the art world?
8. What is the Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Exchange and why is it important?
9. What are some of the new materials and techniques Rauschenberg introduced to the art world?
10. Why is “Booster” one of the most significant prints made in the twentieth century?
11. Why is “Drizzle” an important work?
12. What is outstanding about “Tides”?
13. Explain why Rauschenberg is called creative and innovative by the art world?

Related Activities

1. Have students bring different objects from home. Have them design and make a [combine](#) using these different materials. Have students discuss what they like and do not like about their own [combines](#).
2. Show students the pictures of two of Rauschenberg’s [combines](#). Have each one select a [combine](#) and list the items used in making the [sculpture](#). Have them explain why they do or do not like the [combine](#).
3. Make a picture utilizing pictures from magazines, paint, drawing, and possibly a stamp. How similar can you make your picture to one of Rauschenberg’s artworks? Point out the similarities and differences.
4. Have students look up information about Rauschenberg’s life on the internet or library. Have them report on this by written or verbal reports, a poster, a demonstration of some aspect of his art, a skit, a play, or a timeline of his life showing the different phases he has evolved through in his art.
5. Critique on paper “Booster” utilizing the [Four Step Method of Art Criticism](#) found elsewhere on this website.

Grades 9-12

Kentucky Core Content

AH-H-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate terminology.

AH-H-4.1.32 Art Elements: color and color theory: primary and secondary hues, values (tints and shades), intensity (brightness and dullness); color relationship: triadic, complementary, and analogous.

AH-H-4.1.33 Principles of Design: Balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal pattern), pattern, repetition, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, transition/gradation, and unity.

AH-H-4.1.34 Defend personal interpretations of works of art and architecture by using arguments.

AH-H-4.2.39 Purposes of Art: persuasive (advertising, marketing, propaganda); formalist (abstract, non-objective, arrangement of elements and principles as subject matter).

Objectives

1. To learn that Robert Rauschenberg is considered by many critics as America's most influential and innovative artist despite his early problems in school and at home which were probably impacted by his dyslexia.
2. To understand that Robert Rauschenberg did not realize he had an aptitude for art until he was in the Marines.
3. To realize the Robert Rauschenberg went to several different schools in order to learn how to be an artist.
4. To know that Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg were friends and together founded the [Pop Art movement](#).
5. To learn that Robert Rauschenberg rejected [Abstract Expressionism](#) and founded new ways of painting.
6. To understand that Rauschenberg created [combines](#) mainly in the 50's and 60's and that they cemented his place in art history.
7. To be able to describe the first [combine](#) Rauschenberg made.
8. To understand the function and importance of the Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Exchange.
9. To learn that Rauschenberg has used many techniques and materials in a new way in the art world. These include [photoscreen](#), [silkscreen](#), [lithography](#), [printing](#) onto aluminum, moving plexiglass disks, clothes and other surfaces, [performance pieces](#), [collages](#) and new ways to transfer [photographs](#).
10. To understand why his work entitled "Booster" is one of the most significant prints made in the twentieth century.
11. To know that his work entitled "Drizzle" has significance and why this is true.

12. To realize that his work entitled “Tides” is the first lithograph made from [photo-sensitive stones](#).
13. To fully appreciate that Rauschenberg has created many works of art that are creative and innovative.
14. To gain experience in critiquing a piece of art.

Suggested Questions

1. Explain the negative forces which impacted Rauschenberg’s early life.
2. What training did Rauschenberg obtain in order to equip him for a career in art?
3. Explain why Rauschenberg is considered such an important influence on twentieth century art.
4. Why do you think Rauschenberg broke with [Abstract Expressionism](#)?
5. How did Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns’ friendship and talents combine to found the [Pop Art Movement](#)?
6. What role have musicians and dancers played in Rauschenberg’s life?
7. How did the use of [combines](#) propel Rauschenberg to the pinnacle of art influence in the twentieth century?
8. Describe one of Rauschenberg’s early [combines](#).
9. Why is “Booster” such a significant piece in the art world?
10. Rauschenberg utilized [photoscreens, lithography, and silk screens](#) in producing his art. Explain how each of these methods can be used in [sculptures, prints, and pictures](#). In which of his works did Rauschenberg use these methods?
11. Name and explain at least one of Rauschenberg’s [performance pieces](#).
12. What is a [collage](#) and what is an example of one of Rauschenberg’s [collages](#)?
13. What are the four main steps in critiquing a work of art?
14. Critique “Booster” utilizing the [Four Step Method of Art Criticism](#) found on this web site.
15. Explain why you really appreciate Rauschenberg’s art or why you do not care for his work?

Related Activities

1. Have students decide whether they prefer the work of the [Abstract Expressionists or Pop Artists](#)? Then have each student create a picture/[sculpture](#)/or other art work in their preferred style. Each student is to try to convince their partner that the art is truly reflective of their preferred style.
2. Have students research in greater detail the life and works of Robert Rauschenberg. Have them report their findings through an oral or written report, a poster, a demonstration of some aspect of his art, a play, a skit, a timeline indicating important events in his life and work, or by creating two art works utilizing some of the methods introduced and expanded through Rauschenberg’s work.
3. Have the students search the internet for pictures of Rauschenberg’s art. Have them print the pictures and make them into a booklet. Have students find information about the pictured art work and include it in their booklet. Have students critique the pictures they have and include this information.