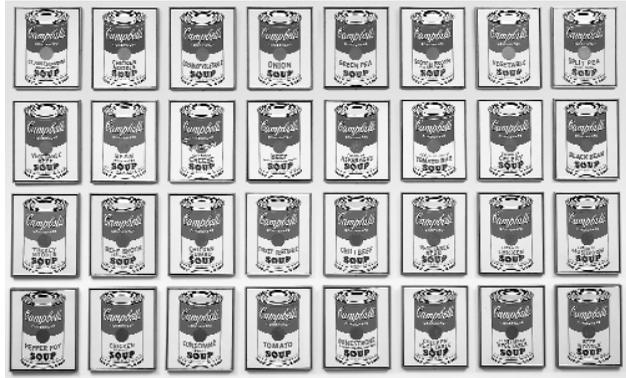


## LESSON THREE: Transforming Everyday Objects



**IMAGE SEVEN:** Robert Rauschenberg. American, born 1925. *Bed*. 1955. Combine painting; oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports, 6' 3 1/4" x 31 1/2" x 8" (191.1 x 80 x 20.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Leo Castelli in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr. © 2007 Robert Rauschenberg



**IMAGE EIGHT:** Andy Warhol. American, 1928–1987. *Campbell's Soup Cans*. 1962. Synthetic polymer paint on thirty-two canvases, each 20 x 16" (50.8 x 40.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Irving Blum; Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest, gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, gift of Nina and Gordon Bunshaft in honor of Henry Moore, Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, Philip Johnson Fund, Frances Keech Bequest, gift of Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, and Florence B. Wesley Bequest (all by exchange). © 2007 Andy Warhol Foundation/ARS, NY/TM Licensed by Campbell's Soup Co. All rights reserved



**IMAGE NINE:** Claes Oldenburg. American, born Sweden, 1929. *Giant Soft Fan*. 1966–67. Vinyl filled with foam rubber, wood, metal, and plastic tubing, fan approx. 10' x 58 7/8" x 61 7/8" (305 x 149.5 x 157.1 cm); cord and plug 24' 3 1/4" (739.6 cm) long. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. © 2007 Claes Oldenburg



**IMAGE TEN:** Roy Lichtenstein. American, 1923–1997. *Turkey Shopping Bag*. 1964. Screenprint on shopping bag with handles. Composition: 7 1/2 x 9" (19.1 x 22.8 cm); bag (irreg.): 19 5/8 x 16 1/8" (49 x 43 cm). Publisher: Bianchini Gallery, New York. Printer: Ben Birillo, New York. Edition: approx. 200. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder

## INTRODUCTION

As the economic prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s brought about an increase in consumerism and the development of the media and advertising, artists began to look for inspiration in the world around them.

This lesson looks at two sources of inspiration for artists: everyday objects and **popular culture**. Artists begin to use everyday objects as inspiration, transforming them into works of art through the use of different mediums, such as paint, sculpture, and printmaking. Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* combines the expressive brushstrokes and the layering of paint that characterized Abstract Expressionism with **found objects**.

Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, and Jasper Johns also drew inspiration from the everyday, particularly from objects and images from popular culture. Popular culture comprises the ideas, interactions, needs, desires, and cultural elements of a particular society.

These **Pop** artists presented objects from consumer culture, like soup cans, fans, and turkeys, in a straightforward manner, using bold expanses of unadulterated color and removing traces of the artist's hand.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider how and why artists use everyday objects as subject matter.
- Students will consider the choices artists make when creating works of art, exploring subject matter and sources of inspiration, **medium**, and **style**.
- Students will make connections between consumer culture and art.
- Students will learn about the technique of **screenprinting**.

## INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask students to define popular culture. How is popular culture influenced by advertising? How are people influenced by the media and advertising? How and why do advertisers promote products? Ask students what affect the media has on their lives. Tell them we will return to ideas of the media's influence later in this lesson as we examine a group of artists who used elements of pop culture as their inspiration.
- Andy Warhol once said, "Everyone is an artist."<sup>20</sup> Ask students if they agree with this statement. Why or why not? Who gets to decide what is art and what is not art? Ask students to make a list of criteria for art. Write some of their answers on the board. Return to this idea as this lesson progresses. Do their ideas change? Why or why not?

## IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

### Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955 (Image Seven)

- Ask students to look at this work of art. Ask them how the artist may have made the work. What materials did he use? How did he use them? Ask them to provide evidence for their ideas.

20. Andy Warhol, quoted in *Pop Art* (London: Taschen, 2003), p. 8.

- **Tell students the title. Ask them how Rauschenberg has transformed this everyday object. Ask them how this is similar or different than their bed at home. Why would an artist put a bed on the wall?**

This is an example of a **combine**, a term used to describe Rauschenberg's technique of attaching found objects such as tires or old furniture to a traditional picture plane. In this work of art, we see a pillow, sheet, and quilt, scribbled with pencil and splashed with paint in a style similar to that of Jackson Pollock. These materials may have been the artist's own blanket and pillow, which he used when he lacked money to buy a canvas.

Although these are materials related to a bed, the artist has hung the work on a wall like art. Rauschenberg said, "Painting relates to both art and life....(I try to act in that gap between the two)."<sup>21</sup>

- **Ask students what they think Rauschenberg means by this statement. How does this quote relate to *Bed*?**
- **Ask students how this could be considered a self-portrait. What can we learn about the artist by looking at this? How is this different from traditional self-portraits?**

#### **Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962 (Image Eight)**

- **Ask students to look closely at this work of art. What do they notice?**
- **Ask them why they think Warhol might have chosen soup cans as a subject.**

Andy Warhol said of Campbell's Soup, "I used to drink it. I used to have the same lunch every day, for twenty years, I guess, the same thing over and over again. Someone said my life has dominated me; I liked that idea."<sup>22</sup>

Warhol was a fashion illustrator, painter, printmaker, sculptor, magazine publisher, filmmaker, photographer, and archivist of his times. His early paintings used motifs taken from advertising and comics. Other subjects included Elvis Presley, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, flowers, cows, self-portraits, nose jobs, and stamps.

When Warhol first exhibited these thirty-two canvases in 1962, each one simultaneously hung from the wall like a painting and rested on a shelf like groceries in a store. The number of canvases corresponds to the varieties of soup sold at that time by the Campbell Soup Company, with each painting featuring a different flavor of soup. Warhol did not indicate how the canvases should be installed. In this image, they are arranged in rows that reflect the chronological order in which the soups were introduced. The first flavor introduced by the company was "Tomato," from 1897.

- **Ask students why they think Warhol included so many canvases. What effect does the repetition have on their viewing experience?**
- **Ask students to discuss their list of criteria for art. What elements do they think need to be present in order to make something a work of art? Do they consider paintings of soup cans to be art? Why or why not?**

21. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 207.

22. Andy Warhol, quoted in Wendy Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA: Prints and Multiples from The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), p. 56.

### Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Soft Fan*, 1966–67 (Image Nine)

- Ask students to look at this sculpture. Refrain from telling them the title right away. What do they think it is? Why?
- Tell them that this object is almost eleven feet tall. Does knowing this change their ideas about the work? Why might the artist have chosen to make this so big?
- Ask students to describe the material used in this work. How is this sculpture different from more traditional sculptures they may have seen? Let them know it is made of vinyl, wood, metal, and plastic.
- Tell them the title, *Giant Soft Fan*. Ask them why they think that Oldenburg might have chosen to make a fan. How is this fan different from traditional fans? How is it similar? Like Rauschenberg's *Bed*, this fan is deprived of its purpose. Are there any other similarities between *Giant Soft Fan* and *Bed*? What are the differences?

In the 1960s, Oldenburg began expanding the subject and material of traditional sculpture. He recreated everyday objects as huge, soft, handmade sculptures. In 1968, critic Richard Kostelanetz said, “Like the human body, which it resembles in its lumps, bumps, folds and crevices, soft sculpture is literally subject to the force of gravity. Gravity, which Oldenburg calls his favorite form creator, determines the final form a work will assume.”<sup>23</sup>

This sculpture is part of a larger series of sculptures of appliances and domestic objects that Oldenburg worked on in 1963. He has also created sculptures of cheeseburgers, a giant ice cream cone, and a large slice of cake, all of which are placed directly on the gallery floor.

In 1967 Oldenburg wrote, “The Fan’s first placement was on Staten Island, blowing up the bay. Later, I sited it as a replacement for the Statue of Liberty...[guaranteeing] workers on Lower Manhattan a steady breeze.”<sup>24</sup>

- Ask students where they would choose to put this fan. Why?
- Like Oldenburg’s other soft sculptures, *Giant Soft Fan* was carefully planned before it was hand sewn by his wife, Pat Oldenburg. Ask students to consider how this kind of production differs from the factory production of traditional fans.

Warhol and Oldenburg both used mundane objects as subjects for their artwork. The artist Roy Lichtenstein also selected an everyday object—a turkey—for subject of one of his works, but he represented it in a different way.

### Roy Lichtenstein, *Turkey Shopping Bag*, 1964 (Image Ten)

- Ask students to look at this work of art. What is the subject? What materials are used? Inform them that this work is called *Turkey Shopping Bag*.
- This is a print. Ask students if they can define a print. Have they ever created a print?

A print is a work of art made up of ink on paper that exists in multiple examples. Lichtenstein, who created this screenprint, is also well known for paintings that are based on comic strips and advertisements.

23. Steven Henry Maddox, *Pop Art: A Critical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), p. 229.

24. Claes Oldenburg, quoted in *MoMA Highlights*, p. 249.

Many Pop artists, such as Lichtenstein and Warhol, used screenprinting techniques because they produced bold areas of unmodulated color, flat surfaces, and a commercial look. The ideas of transference and repetition that are inherent to this medium fit in perfectly with the Pop artists' ideas.

Warhol had a place called The Factory where other people created the prints he designed. Lichtenstein designed this image of a turkey, which other people executed. It was taken from a 1961 Lichtenstein painting and was most likely inspired by a newspaper advertisement.<sup>25</sup>

- **Ask students if they would consider these prints to be works to be art. Does this fit into their criteria for art? Ask them if they believe that artists have to make a work with their own hands. Why or why not?**

The 1950s and 1960s saw a rise in the popularity of the big, self-service supermarket. With this came a new emphasis on packaging. Advertisements became bolder, using fewer words and larger, more colorful designs. An exhibition in 1964 titled *American Supermarket* highlighted the differences and similarities between the actual consumer objects and Pop artists' depictions of them. The exhibition was designed to resemble a supermarket, complete with aisles, shelves, and a checkout counter. On display were art objects next to plastic and actual food items. Lichtenstein made a series of his *Turkey Shopping Bag* for the occasion. Warhol also printed bags with a Campbell's Soup can on it. These bags were sold for twelve dollars each.<sup>26</sup>

- **Ask students to discuss what items were for sale at this exhibition. What do they know about the ways in which art is usually sold? How is this different? Are there any similarities between art and items in a grocery store? What connections were these artists making between art and commerce?**
- **Ask students if such an exhibition happened today, what type of store would they choose to focus on? Would it be a small specialty store, an online marketplace, or a mega-store like Wal-Mart? What products would they feature? Why? If they were to select an image for a bag, what would they select? Why?**
- **Ask students how the Pop artists helped to "democratize" art. Did they make it more accessible? What did subject matter have to do with it? What did medium have to do with it?**

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. Prints and Multiples

Direct students to research prints and multiples created by Pop artists in the 1960s. By using these mediums, Pop artists transformed the idea that art was only for a select few.

### 2. Transform an Object

Ask students to select an everyday object that represents the current time period. Ask them to transform this object into their own artwork out of nontraditional material(s). Before starting, they should make a sketch showing their plan. As artists, they have many choices to make. What is their subject? What material(s) will they use? How big will their work be? How will they incorporate an original idea into their work? What is the title?

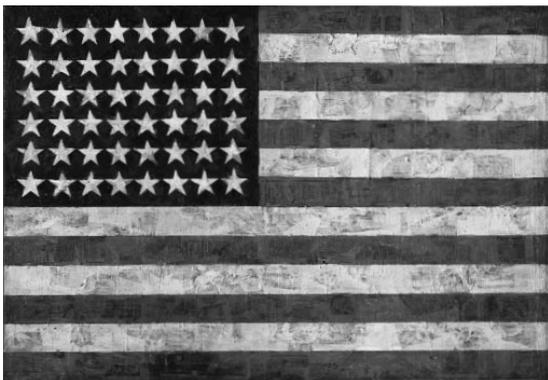
### 3. Nontraditional Self-Portrait

Have students create their own nontraditional self-portraits using found objects. Ask them to create a sketch before they start and to write a paragraph outlining what choices they will make as artists. The choices may concern material, technique, style, and specific subject matter.

25. Ibid.

26. Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA*, p. 72.

## LESSON FOUR: Art and Politics



**IMAGE ELEVEN:** Jasper Johns. American, born 1930. *Flag*. 1954–55 (dated on reverse 1954). Encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric, mounted on plywood, 42 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 60 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (107.3 x 153.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.



**IMAGE TWELVE:** Charles Moore. American, born 1931. *Martin Luther King, Jr. Arrested*. 1958. Gelatin silver print, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ " (21.3 x 31 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Harriette and Noel Levine



**IMAGE THIRTEEN:** Andy Warhol. American, 1928–1987. *Birmingham Race Riot* from the portfolio *X+X (Ten Works by Ten Painters)*. 1964. Screenprint, composition: 19 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 24" (50.7 x 60.9 cm). Publisher: The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. Printer: Sirocco Screenprinters, North Haven, Connecticut, supervised by Ives-Sillman, New Haven, Connecticut. Edition: 500. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Harry C. Oppenheimer (by exchange)