

LESSON SIX: Innovations in Media



**IMAGE FIFTEEN:** Pablo Picasso. Spanish, 1881–1973. *Guitar*. 1912–13. Sheet metal and wire, 30½ x 13¾ x 7⅞" (77.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist. © 2006 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



**IMAGE SIXTEEN:** Pablo Picasso. Spanish, 1881–1973. *She-Goat*. 1950 (cast 1952). Bronze, 46⅞ x 56⅞ x 28⅞" (117.7 x 143.1 x 71.4 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. © 2006 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



**IMAGE SEVENTEEN:** Pablo Picasso. Spanish, 1881–1973. *Goat Skull and Bottle*. 1951 (cast 1954). Painted bronze, 31 x 37⅞ x 21½" (78.8 x 95.3 x 54.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. © 2006 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## INTRODUCTION

Picasso experimented with a variety of mediums, working in both two and three dimensions. His experiments often led him to use unconventional objects in his art, including such disparate items as silver paper and bicycle handlebars—objects that he did not fabricate himself but rather found and appropriated into his work. This lesson focuses on Picasso's assemblages, in which he incorporated preexisting and found objects.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider Picasso's work in different mediums.
- Students will consider the impact of using found materials to create sculpture, and some of Picasso's ideas about perception.
- Students will consider why an artist may choose to work in three dimensions instead of two.

## INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask your students to define **collage**. Ask what they think are typical materials used in a collage. Ask them if they have ever made a collage. Ask what materials they used.
- Ask your students why an artist might choose to take preexisting images or text from magazines and/or newspapers to make his or her artwork. What might an artist consider as he or she chooses the images?
- Inform your students that Picasso made two- and three-dimensional collages, also known as assemblages. Ask your students what their expectations of Picasso's assemblages might be now that they have seen a number of his other, one-dimensional works. What types of found material do they imagine he might have used? What kinds of forms do they imagine he might have created?

## IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Ask your students to take a moment to look at *Guitar*. Inform them that this is a sculpture (a three-dimensional object). Ask your students what they think this object represents. Ask them how they can tell that the object is a guitar. Ask what similarities it shares with a guitar. Ask how it differs.
- Picasso made this object by combining shapes that remind us of a guitar. He made a sculpture of a guitar, but it is not a complete guitar. Ask your students what this might reveal to them about how we perceive familiar objects. Do we need to see the whole object to understand what it is?
- Inform your students that in addition to making a sculpture representing a nontraditional subject, Picasso surprised people by making the sculpture out of sheet metal, a nontraditional material for making a fine art object.
- Ask your students to take a moment to look at *Goat Skull and Bottle*. Ask your students what they notice about this work. Be sure to tell your students that this is a three-dimensional object.

- **Organize your students into groups of twos or threes. Ask them to come up with a list of ideas about the relationship between the three objects in this sculpture.**
- **Representations of inanimate objects are called *still lifes*. Traditionally, still life paintings represent three-dimensional objects—precious and highly prized or common and everyday—in two dimensions. Ask your students to describe the impact of seeing three-dimensional objects represented in three dimensions. Ask your students to consider why Picasso may have chosen a traditionally two-dimensional subject for this sculpture.**
- **Picasso made this object out of found materials, from which he created a mold that he then cast in bronze. The bronze is painted. Ask your students if they recognize any of the objects that Picasso used to create this sculpture.**

The bottle and candle to the left of this work were formed from scrap metal, with nails and spikes representing the rays of light. The goat's skull was made from corrugated board. Nails create the teeth and tufts of hair between the goat's horns. The horns were made from the handlebars of a child's bicycle.

- **Ask your students to take a moment to look at *She-Goat*. This sculpture was also created from found materials. Ask your students if they can tell where Picasso might have used an old wicker basket in this object (the rib cage), vine stalks (the horns), and a large palm frond or leaf (the spine).**

Picasso often rummaged through junkyards looking for objects that might inspire a sculpture. In the case of *She-Goat*, however, he first made sketches and then went looking for pieces that he could combine to make the sculpture. For a while, Picasso kept this sculpture in his garden, occasionally tying his pet goat to it.

- **Ask your students to compare *Guitar*, *Goat Skull and Bottle*, and *She-Goat*. Ask them to think about both the subject of the three sculptures and the materials used to make them.**

Picasso was interested in the idea that an object can be perceived in several different ways at once. For example, we recognize the handlebars in *Goat Skull and Bottle* as handlebars, but we also recognize them as goat's horns. Picasso was interested in the way a viewer might move back and forth between both perceptions while looking at the sculpture.

In an interview, Picasso once said of a found sculpture:

Out of the handle bars and bicycle seat I made a bull's head which everybody recognized as a bull's head. Thus a metamorphosis was completed; and now I would like to see another metamorphosis take place in the opposite direction. Suppose my bull's head is thrown on the scrap heap. Perhaps some day a fellow will come along and say: "Why there's something that would come in very handy for the handle bars [*sic*] of my bicycle. . . ." And so a double metamorphosis would have been achieved.<sup>18</sup>

- **Ask your students to form groups and assemble some found objects from which to create something new. Ask them to consider how their perception shifts back and forth between the found objects and the new object they are creating.**

17. Pablo Picasso, *Statement*, in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 273–74.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Create a collection of found objects in your classroom. Encourage your students to work with the found objects in two ways. First, they can create something that is inspired by what they find. Then they can make a sketch of something that they want to create, and look for the pieces they need to make it. Ask your students to write about which process was easier or more successful, and why.
2. Have your students research the Dada movement (around 1916–1924). Dada artists often used found objects to create art. Compare their use of found objects to the ways in which Picasso used found objects.