MODERN ART AND IDEAS 5
1913–1936

A Guide for Educators

Department of Education at The Museum of Modern Art

DADA AND SURREALISM

Artists included in this guide:
Jean Arp, Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, George Grosz, Hannah Höch, Joan Miró, Meret Oppenheim, Man Ray, and Kurt Schwitters.

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A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This is the fifth volume in the Modern Art and Ideas series for educators, which explores the history of modern art through The Museum of Modern Art's rich collection. While traditional art historical categories are the series' organizing principle, these parameters are used primarily as a means of exploring artistic developments and movements in conjunction with their social and historical context, with attention to the contribution of specific artists. The guide is informed by issues posed by the selected works in a variety of mediums (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography), but its organization and lesson topics are created with the school curriculum in mind, with particular application to social studies, visual art, history, and language arts. Lessons are accompanied by writing, research, and hands-on, art based-activities that encourage students to make connections between the visual arts and other disciplines.

The goal of this guide is to introduce students to Dada and Surrealism, two movements in modern Western art, and to demonstrate to teachers the variety of ways in which art can be used in the classroom. The guide's purpose is not just to explicate works of art but also to demonstrate how images and historical information can be integrated into numerous subject areas and skill bases taught in the classroom. The works featured in this guide span the years 1913 to 1936. Dada and Surrealism were strategies, rather than cohesive styles, that were intended to challenge expectations and accepted values during and between World Wars I and II. Dada ended around 1924, just as the intellectual, literary, and artistic Surrealist movement was beginning. Students will be introduced to significant ideas in art and culture from this period. By comparing a variety of mediums and artistic styles, students will be able to practice observation, articulation, and discussion skills, and to further develop their visual literacy.

The Modern Art and Ideas series was devised with the understanding that the history of modern art is not simply a progression of hermetic styles; rather, a complex matrix of intellectual, social, and historical factors have contributed to the creation of art. Modern art is not solely the product of artists who seek to overthrow convention at all cost. As Kirk Varnedoe suggested, it "has been the product of individual decisions to reconsider the complex possibilities within the traditions available to them, and to act on basic options that were, and remain, broadly available and unconcealed."[1] Indeed, a work of art may be viewed as a locus that invites numerous approaches and offers multiple ways of understanding the historical moment in which it was made as well as the individual who created it.

1. Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), 22.

USING THE EDUCATORS GUIDE

The four lessons that comprise this guide—**Transforming Everyday Objects**, **Revealing Process**, **Portraiture**, and **Landscapes: Real and Imagined**—may be used sequentially or as independent units. The lessons include an introduction to key principles followed by a close examination of each work, including the work's historical context and information on the artist. Discussion questions based on the image lead students through formal analysis of the artwork, and seek to create connections between information and visual evidence. The activities that conclude each lesson encourage students to synthesize what they have learned about the works, and connect the lesson to the broader curriculum or relate it to skills students are practicing in the classroom.

We suggest that you encourage dialogue and debate by asking your students to respond to each others' observations and interpretations. Restating students' responses, periodically reviewing students' comments, and summarizing the discussion all help to validate students' thoughts, focus the discussion, and generate additional ideas about the artwork.

IMAGES

All of the questions, discussions, and activities in this guide are based on the images on the accompanying CD-ROM. Please examine the images carefully before showing them to your students. Your classroom should be equipped with a computer and LCD projector. You may also print images from the CD-ROM to transparency paper for overhead projection.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities sections encourage students to make connections between their own experiences and the concepts presented in the lessons. Through these activities, students will begin to develop a language for discussing and looking at art. Feel free to tailor the activities to the age level of your students.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

Additional discussion questions, and ideas for field trips are included in this section. A bibliography and resources section has also been provided for teachers and students to use in conducting research. The resources recommended in these pages provide further information on the artists and artworks in this guide, general historical topics, and additional classroom activities.

GLOSSARY

A glossary of art historical terms (bolded upon first mention in each lesson) is included at the end of the guide.

SETTING THE SCENE

Dada and Surrealism were two artistic and literary movements that grew out of a dissatisfaction with traditional social values and conventional artistic practices. The artists affiliated with these movements did not share a common style so much as the desire to experiment with new techniques and forms.

Dada began during World War I (1914–1918), when eight million servicemen and an estimated matching number of civilians were killed. This unprecedented loss of human life was a result of trench warfare and technological advances in weaponry, communication, and transportation systems. Dada artists were disillusioned by the social values that led to the war, and sought to expose accepted, and often repressive, conventions of order and logic by shocking people into self-awareness. This international network of artists employed unorthodox techniques and materials to create new forms of visual art, performance, and poetry as well as alternative visions of the world.

Led by André Breton, Surrealism began in Paris in 1924, and was active through World War II. Influenced by Sigmund Freud's writings on psychology, this literary, intellectual, and artistic movement was interested in how the irrational unconscious mind could move beyond the constraints of the rational world.

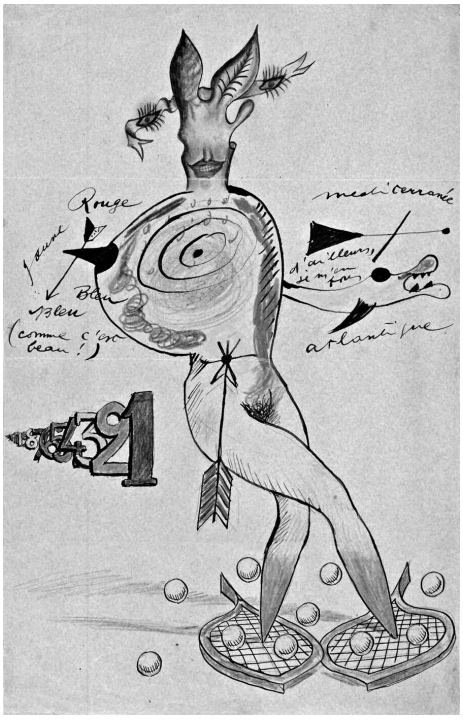

IMAGE ONE: Cadavre Exquis with Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, Max Morise, and Man Ray (Emmanuel Radnitzky). *Nude.* 1926–27. Composite drawing of ink, pencil, and crayon on paper, sheet: 14⅛ x 9" (35.9 x 22.9 cm); frame: 22⅜ x 16¾" (56.8 x 42.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase.

- **Show your students the image of *Nude*. Ask your students to describe what they see.**
- **Ask your students whether they consider the figure to be human or animal. Ask them to provide visual evidence of their ideas.**
- **Ask your students to describe any similarities and differences between the styles of the head, neck, torso, and legs of the figure.**
- **Ask your students to infer how this work was made, based on visual evidence.**

Inform your students that *Nude* is an Exquisite Corpse drawing made by the Surrealist artists Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, Max Morise, and Man Ray. (Other works by Miró and Man Ray are explored later on in this guide.) The drawing was created by folding a paper into four sections, and each participant contributed in turn a section of the figure without seeing the previous contribution.

Inform your students that Exquisite Corpse was originally a word game. To play, each participant wrote a word, then folded the paper so that the next participant could not see previous contributions. This tended to result in nonsensical phrases like "The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine," after which the game was named.[2]

1. CHANCE WORDS

In 1920, one of the founding members of Dada, Tristan Tzara, wrote instructions for making a Dada poem, leaving the responsibility of selecting words and communicating ideas up to chance rather than the artist. Here are Tzara's instructions:

TO MAKE A DADAIST POEM
Take a newspaper.
Take some scissors.
Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem.
Cut out the article.
Next carefully cut out each of the words that makes up this article and put them all in a bag.
Shake gently.
Next take out each cutting one after the other.
Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag.
The poem will resemble you.
And there you are—an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd.[3]

2. Matthew Gale, *Dada and Surrealism* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 225.
3. Ibid, 63-64.

Following Tzara's instructions, direct your students to make their own Dadaist poems from one or two paragraphs of a newspaper article. After they are finished, have your students read their poems aloud to the class and discuss. Ask them to reflect upon their experience of making and hearing these poems. What are their favorite or least favorite word combinations? What is the effect of reading words that have been put together without logic?

2. ARTISTIC COLLABORATION

Beginning in the early 1920s, the Surrealists revived a modified version of Exquisite Corpse. Like the original word game, the new version required artists to surrender their creative control and be open to unexpected possibilities. One person would draw a portion of the body, fold his or her section over to hide it, and pass it on to the next participant, who would repeat the steps until the drawing was complete.

Divide your class into groups of four students each to play Exquisite Corpse. Many Exquisite Corpse drawings follow the human figure, and incorporate any number of elements, including animal and mechanical ones. Each student in the group should start one drawing, folding a vertical sheet of paper horizontally into four equal parts (dividing the "body" roughly into head, neck, torso, and legs). After completing a section, he or she should fold it over and pass it on to the remaining students in their group until the picture is done. Your students may look only at the marks on the side of the fold they are working on as a reference and starting point for their section.

After the class completes their drawings, direct your students to examine and discuss similarities and differences among the drawings. Ask your students to discuss the experience of drawing an Exquisite Corpse. What was it like to draw without seeing the other sections?

Ask your students if they are pleased with the results of their four-person drawing or if they would prefer to have had total creative control. Ask how they think their drawings would have differed if each participant had seen the previous contributions.

LESSONS

LESSON ONE: Transforming Everyday Objects

IMAGE TWO: Marcel Duchamp. *Bicycle Wheel.* 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913). Metal wheel mounted on painted wooden stool, 50½ x 25½ x 16⅝" (128.3 x 63.8 x 42 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Estate of Marcel Duchamp

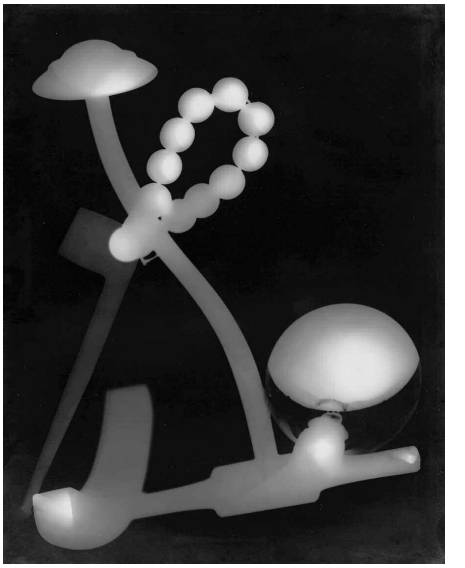

IMAGE THREE: Man Ray (born Emmanuel Radnitzky). *Rayograph.* 1923. Gelatin silver print, 11 9/16 x 9⅛" (29.4 x 23.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of James Thrall Soby. © 2006 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

IMAGE FOUR: Meret Oppenheim. *Object (Le Déjeuner en fourrure).* 1936. Fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon, cup: 4⅜" (10.9 cm) in diameter; saucer: 9⅜" (23.7 cm) in diameter; spoon: 8" (20.2 cm) long; overall height: 2⅞" (7.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Pro Litteris, Zurich

INTRODUCTION

Dada and Surrealist artists questioned long-held assumptions about what a work of art should be about and how it should be made. Rather than creating every element of their artworks, they boldly selected everyday, manufactured objects and either modified and combined them with other items or simply selected them and called them "art." In this lesson students will consider their own criteria for something to be called a work of art, and then explore three works of art that may challenge their definitions.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- **Students will consider their own definitions of art.**
- **Students will consider how Dada and Surrealist artists challenged conventional ideas of art.**
- **Students will be introduced to Readymades and photograms.**

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- **Ask your students to take a moment to think about what makes something a work of art. Does art have to be seen in a specific place? Where does one encounter art? What is art supposed to accomplish? Who is it for?**
- **Ask your students to create an individual list of their criteria. Then, divide your students into small groups to discuss and debate the results and come up with a final list. Finally, ask each group to share with the class what they think is the most important criteria and what is the most contested criteria for something to be called a work of art. Write these on the chalkboard for the class to review and discuss.**

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- **Show your students the image of *Bicycle Wheel.* Ask your students if Marcel Duchamp's sculpture fulfills any of their criteria for something to be called a work of art. Ask them to support their observations with visual evidence.**
- **Inform your students that Duchamp made this work by fastening a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool. Ask your students to consider the fact that Duchamp rendered these two functional objects unusable. Make certain that your students notice that there is no tire on the bicycle wheel.**

To challenge accepted notions of art, Duchamp selected mass-produced, often functional objects from everyday life for his artworks, which he called **Readymades**. He did this to shift viewers' engagement with a work of art from what he called the "retinal" (there to please the eye) to the "intellectual" ("in the service of the mind.")[4] By doing so, Duchamp subverted the traditional notion that beauty is a defining characteristic of art.

Inform your students that *Bicycle Wheel* is the third version of this work. The first, now lost, was made in 1913, almost forty years earlier. Because the materials Duchamp selected to be Readymades were mass-produced, he did not consider any Readymade to be "original."

- **Ask your students to revisit their list of criteria for something to be called a work of art. Ask them to list criteria related specifically to the visual aspects of a work of art (such as "beauty" or realistic rendering).**

4. H. H. Arnason and Marla F. Prather, *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photography* (Fourth Edition) (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 274.

Duchamp said of *Bicycle Wheel*, "In 1913 I had the happy idea to fasten a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool and watch it *turn*."[5] *Bicycle Wheel* is a **kinetic sculpture** that depends on motion for effect. Although Duchamp selected items for his Readymades without regard to their so-called beauty, he said, "To see that wheel turning was very soothing, very comforting . . . I enjoyed looking at it, just as I enjoy looking at the flames dancing in a fireplace."[6] By encouraging viewers to spin *Bicycle Wheel*, Duchamp challenged the common expectation that works of art should not to be touched.

- **Show your students *Rayograph*. Ask your students to name recognizable shapes in this work. Ask them to support their findings with visual evidence. How do they think this image was made?**

Inform your students that *Rayograph* was made by Man Ray, an American artist who was well-known for his portrait and fashion photography. Man Ray transformed everyday objects into mysterious images by placing them on photographic paper, exposing them to light, and oftentimes repeating this process with additional objects and exposures. When photographic paper is developed in chemicals, the areas blocked from light by objects placed on the paper earlier on will remain light, and the areas exposed to light will turn black. Man Ray discovered the technique of making photograms by chance, when he placed some objects in his darkroom on light-sensitive paper and accidentally exposed them to light. He liked the resulting images and experimented with the process for years to come. He likened the technique, now known as the photogram, to "painting with light," calling the images **rayographs**, after his assumed name.

- **Now that your students have identified some recognizable objects used to make *Rayograph*, ask them to consider which of those objects might have been translucent and which might have been opaque, based on the tone of the shapes in the photogram.**

- **Now show your students Meret Oppenheim's sculpture *Object (Déjeuner en fourrure)*. Both *Rayograph* and *Object* were made using everyday objects and materials not traditionally used for making art, which, when combined, challenge ideas of reality in unexpected ways. Ask your students what those everyday objects are and how they have been transformed by the artists.**

- **Ask your students to name some traditional uses for the individual materials (cup, spoon, saucer, fur) used to make *Object*. Ask your students what choices they think Oppenheim made to transform these materials and objects.**

In 1936, the Swiss artist Oppenheim was at a café in Paris with her friends Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar. Oppenheim was wearing a bracelet she had made from fur-lined, polished metal tubing. Picasso joked that one could cover anything with fur, to which Oppenheim replied, "Even this cup and saucer."[7] Her tea was getting cold, and she reportedly called out, "Waiter, a little more fur!" Soon after, when asked to participate in a Surrealist exhibition, she bought a cup, saucer, and spoon at a department store and lined them with the fur of a Chinese gazelle.[8]

- **Duchamp, Oppenheim, and Man Ray transformed everyday objects into Readymades, Surrealist objects, and photograms. Ask your students to review the images of the three artworks in this lesson and discuss the similarities and differences between these artists' transformation of everyday objects.**

5. John Elderfield, ed., *Studies in Modern Art 2: Essays on Assemblage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 135.
6. Francis M. Naumann, *The Mary and William Sisler Collection* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 160.
7. Bice Curiger, *Meret Oppenheim: Defiance in the Face of Freedom* (Zurich, Frankfurt, New York: PARKETT Publishers Inc., 1989), 39.
8. Josephine Withers, "The Famous Fur-Lined Teacup and the Anonymous Meret Oppenheim" (New York: *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 52, November 1977), 88–93.

ACTIVITIES

1. Art and Controversy

At the time they were made, works of art like Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* and Oppenheim's *Object* were controversial. Critics called Duchamp's Readymades immoral and vulgar—even plagiaristic. Overwhelmed by the publicity *Object* received, Oppenheim sunk into a twenty-year depression that greatly inhibited her creative production.

Ask your students to conduct research on a work of art that has recently been met with controversy. Each student should find at least two articles that critique the work of art. Have your students write a one-page summary of the issues addressed in these articles. Students should consider how and why the work challenged and upset critics. Was the controversial reception related to the representation, the **medium**, the scale, the cost, or the location of the work? After completing the assignment, ask your students to share their findings with the class. Keep a list of shared critiques among the work's various receptions.

2. Make a Photogram

If your school has a darkroom, have your students make photograms. Each student should collect several small objects from school, home, and the outside to place on photographic paper. Their collection should include a range of translucent and opaque objects to allow different levels of light to shine through. Students may want to overlap objects or use their hands to cover parts of the light-sensitive paper. Once the objects are arranged on the paper in a darkroom, have your students expose the paper to light for several seconds (probably about five to ten seconds, depending on the level of light) then develop, fix, rinse, and dry the paper. Allow for a few sheets of photographic paper per student so that they can experiment with different arrangements and exposures. After the photograms are complete, have your students discuss the different results that they achieved. Students may also make negatives of their photograms by placing them on top of a fresh sheet of photographic paper and covering the two with a sheet of glass. After exposing this to light, they can develop the paper to get the negative of the original photogram.

LESSON TWO: Revealing Process

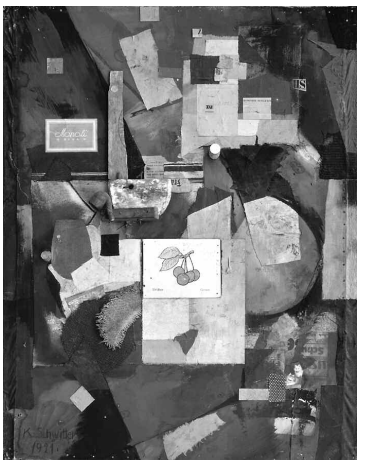

IMAGE FIVE: Kurt Schwitters. *Merz Picture 32A* (*The Cherry Picture*). 1921. Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers, cloth, wood, metal, cork, oil, pencil, and ink on board, 36⅛ x 27¾" (91.8 x 70.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mr. and Mrs. A. Atwater Kent, Jr. Fund. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

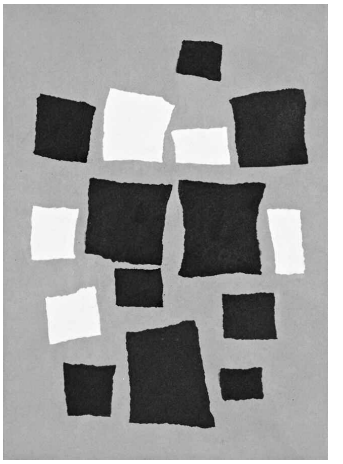

IMAGE SIX: Jean Arp (Hans Arp). *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*. 1916–17. Torn-and-pasted paper on blue-gray paper, 19⅛ x 13⅝" (48.5 x 34.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

INTRODUCTION

Many Dada and Surrealist artists were critical of the dominant social structures and political strategies that led to World Wars I and II. To critique the systems that shaped society, they turned to new art-making strategies, including **collage**. As practiced by Dada artists, collage could involve chance. Collage could also rely on prefabricated sources, particularly magazines, newspapers, and other printed mass media, thus incorporating popular and commodity culture into a work of art.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- **Students will be introduced to the strategy of collage.**
- **Students will be introduced to the concept of chance and how it has played a role in the production of visual art.**
- **Students will explore how artists incorporated materials from everyday life into their works of art, including images from the mass media.**

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- **Ask your students to describe what objects, images, and texts they have on the walls of their bedrooms or on bulletin boards. Ask them to consider what these objects and their arrangement reveal about them as individuals. Have your students name similarities and differences between school bulletin boards and their own walls or bulletin boards at home with respect to choice of content and how it is arranged.**

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- **Give your class a couple of minutes to look at *Merz Picture 32A* (*The Cherry Picture*) by Kurt Schwitters. Ask your students to describe what they see. Ask them to consider composition, color, material, and images.**

- **Ask your students to imagine how this picture was made. To help students explain what they are seeing, it may be useful to introduce them to the term "collage."**

Inform the class that Schwitters made this work from scraps and objects he collected from the streets of his hometown of Hannover, Germany. Although he scavenged the fragments, Schwitters carefully composed and affixed them with glue and nails to a painted board to make this collage.

Schwitters was trained as a painter, but as World War I came to an end he adopted collage as his preferred process, saying, "[. . .] everything had broken down in any case and new things had to be made out of the fragments."[9] *Merz Picture 32A (The Cherry Picture)* belongs to the so-called Merz series, a term Schwitters derived from a syllable of the German word "Kommerz" (commerce), which he included in one of his early collage paintings.

Merz Picture 32A has many layers. It might be helpful to guide your students in identifying the objects in the various layers. Light and dark paint on the board form the base of the collage and contribute to an illusion of depth. Affixed are various fabrics, an image of kittens, newspaper clippings, and a flashcard of cherries, onto which Schwitters penciled in German the ungrammatical phrase, "*Ich liebe dir!*" (I love she!). Three-dimensional objects, such as a wine cork and a broken pipe, protrude from the surface.

Schwitters stated that with his Merz project he aimed "to create connections, preferably between everything in this world." [10]

- **Referring to the objects your students named in the picture, ask them to draw connections between the fragments and to consider how they might be related.**

- **Now show your students *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, by Jean Arp. Refrain from telling them the title right away. Ask your students to take a couple of minutes to look at the image and to describe what they see. Ask them to include composition, color, material, and images in their description.**

Although they used different materials and techniques for their collages, Schwitters and Arp were friends who collaborated on many art projects and publications.

- **Using visual evidence, ask your students to compare and contrast *Merz Picture 32A* and *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*. How are they similar and how are they different?**

- **Ask your students how they think Arp's work was made.**

9. Leah Dickerman, *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* (Landover, Maryland: The National Gallery of Art, 2005), 159.
10. Ibid, 163.

Inform your students of the title of this work, and read aloud the following passage by Arp's friend and fellow artist Hans Richter. Apparently, Arp, frustrated with a drawing he had been working on for some time,

> [. . .] finally tore it up, and let the pieces flutter to the floor of his studio[. . . .] Some time later he happened to notice these same scraps of paper as they lay on the floor, and was struck by the pattern they formed. It had all the expressive power that he had tried in vain to achieve. How meaningful! How telling! Chance movements of his hand and of the fluttering scraps of paper had achieved what all his efforts had failed to achieve, namely *expression*. He accepted this challenge from chance as a decision of fate and carefully pasted the scraps down in the pattern which chance had determined.[11]

- **Ask your students if knowing how this collage was made changes their initial ideas about it. Why or why not?**

Arp made many collages according to chance. To remove his own artistic intervention even further, he sometimes used a paper cutter to cut the squares rather than tearing them by hand. However, there are accounts that Arp may have occasionally undermined chance and arranged the squares himself.

- **Ask your students if they believe that the artist made this work using chance, based on their evaluation of the collage's composition. Ask them why or why not.**

ACTIVITIES

Merz Picture 32A (The Cherry Picture) can be viewed as a journal of objects encountered by the artist. Ask your students to collect five objects, images, or fragments that they find over the course of a day or weekend, and make a collage. Ask them to write a journal to accompany the visual one of found objects, explaining the objects' significance and making connections between them. What objects did they collect? What objects did they leave behind?

Both Schwitters and Arp were forced to flee their homes due to military invasions leading up to World War II. In 1937, the Nazis confiscated thousands of modern works of art, including several of Schwitters's Merz pictures. Many of these were included in *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate art), a Nazi-organized exhibition in Munich intended as a platform to mock and condemn modern art. Ask your students to conduct research on this exhibition. How many works were in the exhibition, and why were they selected? How many people visited the exhibition, and how was it received critically? What affect did the show's reception have on the artists whose works were in the exhibition? Where did the works of art end up after the exhibition? After students have conducted their research, ask them to discuss their findings and debate issues of censorship in the arts.

11. Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002), 51.

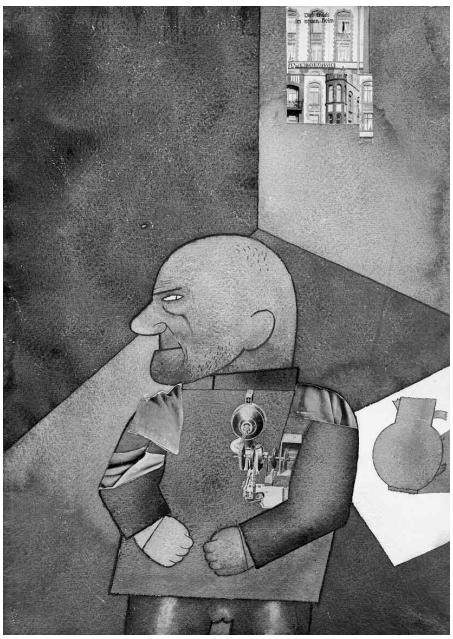

IMAGE SEVEN: George Grosz. *"The Convict": Monteur John Heartfield after Franz Jung's Attempt to Get Him Up on His Feet.* 1920. Watercolor, pencil, cut-and-pasted postcards, and halftone relief on paper, 16½ x 12" (41.9 x 30.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of A. Conger Goodyear. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

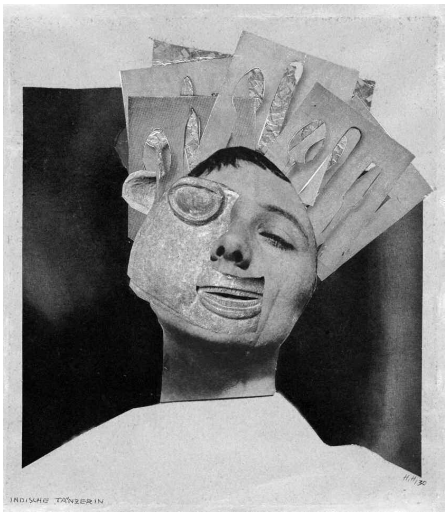

IMAGE EIGHT: Hannah Höch. *Indian Dancer (From an Ethnographic Museum).* 1930. Photomontage with collage, 10⅛ x 8⅞" (25.7 x 22.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Frances Keech Fund. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

IMAGE NINE: Man Ray (born Emmanuel Radnitzky). *Indestructible Object (or Object to Be Destroyed).* 1964 (replica of 1923 original). Metronome with cutout photograph of eye on pendulum, 8⅞ x 4⅜ x 4⅝" (22.5 x 11 x 11.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. James Thrall Soby Fund. © 2006 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

INTRODUCTION

Portraits can represent individuals in many different ways. A portrait can be a literal representation of a person or it can represent a person symbolically. Rather than seeking to capture a particular person's physical appearance, Dada and Surrealist artists often sought to represent character, disposition, and the inner psyche. In order to represent such subjective and symbolic aspects of their sitters, artists often developed new compositional devices, and used non-naturalistic color and scale, as well as non-traditional materials, to reveal something about their subject.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- **Students will be introduced to some of the conventions of portraiture.**
- **Students will consider how symbols can be used in a portrait to add meaning.**
- **Students will be introduced to the technique of photomontage.**

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- **Begin the conversation by asking your students to define portraiture. Ask them if they have ever sat for a portrait. Perhaps they have had their picture taken at school. Ask them if they do anything special in preparation for having their picture taken. Ask them why or why not.**
- **Ask your students to imagine that they are sitting for their portrait. Ask them what someone looking at their portrait could learn about them from what they are wearing (costume or outfit) or from the expression on their face.**

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Ask your students to take a moment to look at *"The Convict": Monteur John Heartfield after Franz Jung's Attempt to Get Him Up on His Feet.*

- **Ask your students what they think is going on in this work. To help your students explain what they are seeing, it may be useful to introduce them to the terms foreground, middle ground and background. In this image the figure is in the foreground, the vase is in the middle ground, and the corner and window are in the background.**
- **Ask your students to describe the figure's pose, expression, and costume. Ask them what they can tell about this person just by looking at the figure.**

Inform your students that this work is by the German artist George Grosz. In 1917, after being drafted for his second military service, Grosz was promptly deemed unfit to serve, and was discharged and placed in a sanitarium. The title figure is the artist's friend and fellow Berlin Dada artist John Heartfield, who was confined to a military hospital for most of his service after a mental breakdown on the eve of his mobilization. Deeply disillusioned by their experiences in the military, both Grosz and Heartfield were known for their politically satirical images, journals, and performances.

- **Ask your students if they are familiar with the term "caricature." Ask them to give examples of caricatures that they have seen.**
- **Ask your students if they think that the figure in *"The Convict"* could be considered a caricature. Ask why or why not.**

Although not a realistic rendering of Heartfield, the figure's pose and expression capture his real-life political defiance. Interestingly, the likeness is actually closer to that of Grosz himself, who may have created a self-portrait in empathy with his friend.

- **Ask your students to consider what materials were used to make this image.**

Inform your students that this is a watercolor with some collaged elements, including a postcard of a delicatessen and wine shop. The postcard fragment acts as a window from the convict's cell looking outside, but is ironically inscribed, "Lots of luck in your new home." Other collaged elements in this work are a small machine situated where the figure's heart should be, and patches of material.

- **Ask your students to consider what the machine in place of a heart might symbolize.**

Inform your students that the machine relates to the title adopted by both Grosz and Heartfield, "*monteur*," which means engineer or constructor. They called themselves *monteurs* because they considered their artistic production to be similar to the work of technicians.

Show your students *Indian Dancer (From an Ethnographic Museum)*, by Hannah Höch.

- **Divide your students into pairs. Ask them to compare and contrast this image with *"The Convict": Monteur John Heartfield after Franz Jung's Attempt to Get Him Up*, keeping in mind composition and the materials used in both works. Once they have come up with a number of similarities, go around the room and have each pair name one. Tell your students that they cannot repeat an idea that has already been stated, so they must listen closely to one another.**

Inform your students that this is a **photomontage** made by the German artist Höch, who took much of her source material from the mainstream press and advertisements. The right side of the face is a publicity photograph of the actress Maria Falconetti, who starred in Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. The left side of the face is a photograph of a wood dance mask from Cameroon, in Central Africa. Joan of Arc's traditional straw crown has been replaced with cut-out silhouettes of silverware.

- **Ask your students to consider how the different images combined in *Indian Dancer* construct the subject's identity. Ask your students how the composition, or arrangement of these elements, contributes to how they perceive the subject.**

Inform your students that Höch was interested in examining and critiquing the representation of women as well as other social and political issues in Weimar Germany.

- **Ask your students to look at the image of *Indestructible Object (or Object to Be Destroyed)*. Ask them if it could be considered a portrait.**

Devastated after his girlfriend and fellow photographer Lee Miller broke up with him in 1933, Man Ray cut out and attached a photograph of her eye to the pendulum of a metronome. Although he attached only a fragmented image of Miller, the instructions accompanying the work, which he at first called *Object to Be Destroyed*, indicate that for Man Ray the object was an emotionally evocative portrait. Man Ray created a number of versions of *Indestructible Object*, many of which have survived. In the instructions, he invites us to create our own "Indestructible Object":

Cut out the eye from the photograph of one who has been loved but is seen no more. Attach the eye to the pendulum of a metronome and regulate the weight to suit the tempo desired. Keep going to the limit of endurance. With a hammer well-aimed, try to destroy the whole at a single blow.

- **Ask your students if any of them have ever used a metronome. If so, ask them to explain the function of metronomes (to keep tempo when playing a musical instrument) and to describe their experience using one.**

Quite radically, Man Ray's instructions encourage us to destroy the very work of art he instructs us to create. Have your students consider what it means to destroy art. It may be helpful to introduce your students to the term "**iconoclasm**."

Inform your students that in 1957 a group of students protesting a Dada exhibition in Paris stole one of these objects. When Man Ray filed a claim with his insurance company, the agent suggested that he buy an unlimited supply of metronomes with his reimbursement money. Man Ray replied that not only would he do just that, he would also change the name of the work. What he had at first called "*Object to be Destroyed*" was renamed "*Indestructible Object*."

- **Ask your students if *Indestructible Object* matches their definition of a portrait. Does it have anything in common with the other two images in this lesson? Ask them how they would perceive this work differently if the image attached to the metronome were a nose, an ear, or the eye of a person whom they know.**

ACTIVITY

Now that your students have explored different ways artists have created portraits, ask them to make a photomontage portrait or a caricature. If they want to create a photomontage, direct them to bring in source images from magazines, postcards, photocopies, and/or photographs. If they want to create a caricature, they will just need paper and a pen or pencil.

Your students should consider whether they want to make a self-portrait, a portrait of someone they know personally, or a portrait of a famous political figure or entertainer. After completing the project, students should present their portraits and explain how and why they chose to render their subject as they did.

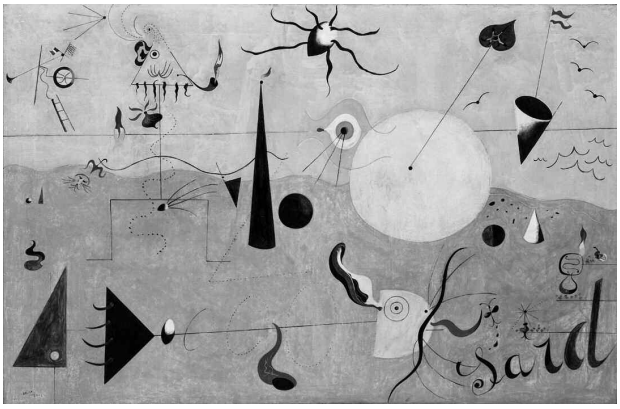

IMAGE TEN: Joan Miró. *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape).* 1923–24. Oil on canvas, 25½ x 39½" (64.8 x 100.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2006 Successió Miró / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

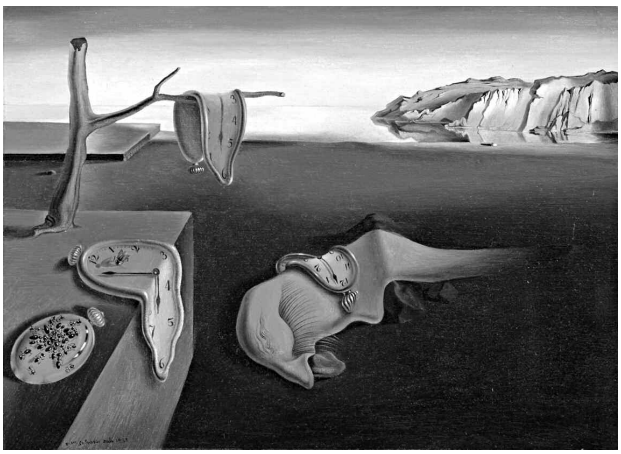

IMAGE ELEVEN: Salvador Dalí. *The Persistence of Memory.* 1931. Oil on canvas, 9½ x 13" (24.1 x 33 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously. © 2006 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

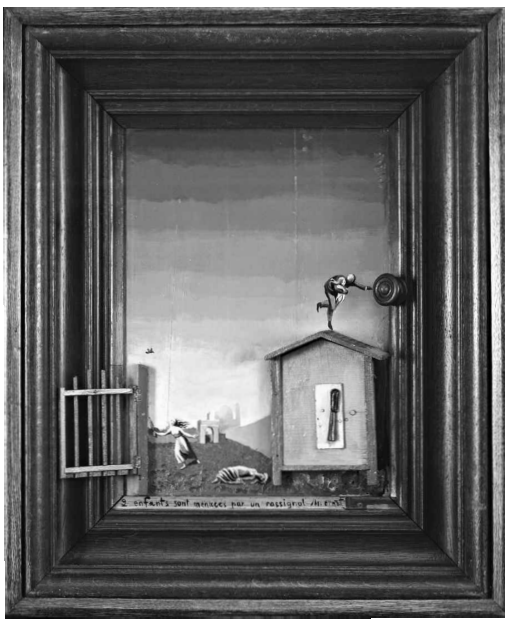

IMAGE TWELVE: Max Ernst. *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale.* 1924. Oil on wood with painted wood elements and frame, 27½ x 22½ x 4½" (69.8 x 57.1 x 11.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

INTRODUCTION

Landscape was a popular subject for a great number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artists, many of whom painted outside, directly from nature. Surrealist artists employed a very different source for their landscapes—the unconscious mind. In this lesson, students will examine three landscapes incorporating images from nature as well as from the unconscious that challenge expectations of the traditional genre.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- **Students will become familiar with the terms "landscape," "iconography," and "abstract," and will revisit the terms "foreground," "middle ground," and "background."**

- **Students will explore how the artist's perception impacts the way he or she interprets and represents a subject**

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Give your students a moment to look at *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*.

- **Ask your students to define "landscape" (a work of art whose primary focus is natural scenery). Ask your students why this painting might be considered a landscape. Ask them if they can identify natural or organic imagery in this work.**

- **Ask your students to write down five words that describe the place depicted in this painting.**

- **Ask your students to choose some favorite words from their list and share them with the class. Direct them to use visual evidence from the work to explain their word choices. Make a list of the favorite words on a chalkboard or on chart paper.**

The Hunter (Catalan Landscape) was painted by the Spanish artist Joan Miró. The preparatory sketches for this painting, which were more **figurative**, show a peasant about to barbecue his lunch. At first glance, this painting may look abstract, but it is filled with meaningful iconography. Introduce your students to the terms "abstract" and "iconography."

- **Ask your students to list the iconography that is recognizable to them. Write a list of the words on a chalkboard or on chart paper.**

- **Ask your students to locate the title figure, the hunter, in this painting. After giving them a few moments, inform your students that the hunter is the stick figure with the mustachioed, triangle head, smoking a pipe. Ask your students to find other parts of his body—such as his heart (which shoots flames), his eye, and his ear. This figure, which recurs in other paintings by Miró, is considered to be a self-portrait.**

- **Ask your students to pick out other iconography in the work, using visual evidence to support their choices. They may notice the large beige circle, a cross-section of the trunk of a carob tree that sprouts a leaf and a giant eye bisected by the horizon line. Visible to the left is a ladder and wheel topped by two flags. In reference to the fragmented letters and words found in Dada and Surrealist poetry, Miró placed the word "SARD" (short for "Sardana," the national dance of Catalonia) in the bottom right corner of the painting.**

About his transition in 1923 from painting directly from nature to working in a Paris studio, Miró explained, "I have managed to escape into the absolute nature, and my landscapes have nothing in common anymore with outside reality . . . ."[12] That said, he apparently felt that his paintings embodied the locations as much as if he'd painted them from nature.

- **Ask your students to consider in what ways *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* resembles a collage (see Lesson Two).**

- **Now ask your students to look carefully at *The Persistence of Memory*, by Salvador Dalí. Have your students write down five words that describe the place depicted in this painting. Ask them to choose some favorite words from their list and share them with the class. Direct them to use visual evidence from the work to explain their word choices. Make a list of the words on a chalkboard or on chart paper.**

- **Compare this list of words to the one for *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*. How many words do the two have in common? How many words are different?**

Inform your students that the Spanish artist Dalí painted *The Persistence of Memory* in 1931. He frequently described his paintings as "hand-painted dream" photographs.

Dalí was very interested in Sigmund Freud's writings on psychology. An Austrian psychologist writing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Freud revolutionized the way people think about the mind with his theory of the unconscious. The unconscious is the part of the psyche that thinks and feels without the person being aware of those thoughts and feelings. According to Freud, dreams are coded messages from the unconscious, and Surrealist artists were interested in what could be revealed by their dreams.

Influenced by Freud's writings on dreams and the unconscious, Dalí self induced hallucinations in order to access his unconscious while creating works of art. He called this the "paranoiac-critical method." On the results of this process, he wrote, "I am the first to be surprised and often terrified by the images I see appear upon my canvas. I register without choice and with all possible exactitude the dictates of my subconscious, my dreams. . . ."[13] Although he claimed to be surprised by the images, Dalí rendered them with meticulous precision, creating the illusion that these places could exist in the real world. Dalí, in his typically ironic way, once said of himself, "The only difference between a madman and me is that I am not mad."[14]

- **Ask your students why this painting might be considered a landscape, based on the definitions they came up with earlier. Ask them to name elements in *The Persistence of Memory* that remind them of real views in nature. Ask them to name unusual or unfamiliar elements that may have come from Dalí's imagination. Are some of the elements hard to categorize as being strictly from nature or strictly from the imagination?**

After your students have responded, inform them that Dalí painted the coastal seaside landscape based on the cliffs in his home region of Catalonia. The ants and melting clocks are recognizable images that Dalí placed in an unfamiliar context or rendered in an unfamiliar way. The large central creature comprised of a deformed nose and eye was drawn from the imagination, although it has frequently been interpreted as a self-portrait.

- **Ask your students to look at *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, but refrain from mentioning the title. Ask them to describe what is going on in the foreground, middle ground, and background of the painting.**

12. William S. Rubin, *Miró in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 21.
13. Salvador Dalí, quoted in press release, The Museum of Modern Art, 1934.
14. Salvador Dalí, quoted in *MoMA Highlights: 350 Works from The Museum of Modern Art* (revised edition) (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 154.

Inform your students that this work is by Max Ernst, a German artist involved in both Dada and Surrealism. Like Dalí, Ernst, who created many dreamlike images, was also interested in Freud's writings on psychology.

The title of the work is inscribed at the base of the image. The work may be linked to a "fever-vision" Ernst experienced when he had measles at the age of six, "provoked," as he wrote (in the third person), "by an imitation-mahogany panel opposite his bed, the grooves of the wood taking successively the aspect of an eye, a nose, a bird's head, a menacing nightingale, a spinning top, and so on."[15] A poem Ernst penned shortly before making this work, begins, "At nightfall, at the outskirts of the village, two children are threatened by a nightingale."[16]

- **Ask your students if knowing the title changes what they think about the painting. As there are more than two figures in the work, ask your students to consider which figures might be the children and who the other figures might be.**

While Ernst rendered *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* with attention to illusionism, modeling of form, and **perspective**, he also attached real, three-dimensional objects to the painting. Ask your students to name some of the items attached to the painting and frame (red wood gate, red hut, and red and blue knob).

- **Ask your students to consider why Ernst might have combined three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional painted illusions of objects in this work. Ask them why the artist might have extended the painting to the inner edge of the frame. How might this relate to the artist's interest in dreams?**

- **Refer back to the lists your students created to describe the landscapes in *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* and *Persistence of Memory*. Could any of the words be applied to this image? Which ones and why?**

ACTIVITIES

Look at *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*, *The Persistence of Memory*, and *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* with your students again. Ask them to imagine what it would be like to spend a day in each of the landscapes depicted in these artworks. Ask them to write "postcards" from each of the three locations. They should include both a description of the places shown in the images and a description of the mood that comes across in each image.

Have your students keep a dream journal for one week, writing down any images or scenes that they remember upon waking. At the end of the week, ask your students to pick an image or scene from one of their dreams to write about further or to incorporate into a work of art. Ask them to consider if any of the images from their dreams resemble real locations they have visited in the past. Encourage students who have difficulty remembering their dreams to create a landscape from their imagination.

15. Helen M. Franc, *An Invitation to See: 150 Works in The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 87.
16. Ibid, 87.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Looking Back

This guide discusses a number of artists who were disillusioned by and critical of World Wars I and II. Ask your students to research other artists who produced artworks that responded to politics, social mores, or historical events of the time. Examples could include Francisco de Goya, Jacques-Louis David, and Édouard Manet. Students should consider in what ways these artists expressed their criticism, including the style and subject matter of the artwork. How were these works of art received?

Contemporaries

This guide explores artists working in Western Europe during the 1910s through the 1930s. Ask your students to investigate artists working in other countries at the time who responded to their historical moment. Examples could include the Russian artists El Lissitzky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Kazimir Malevich, who developed revolutionary forms of art called "Constructivism" and "Suprematism." In 1919, Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus school in Germany, which sought to wed manufacturing and craft, fostering connections between art, architecture, design, and everyday life. Vasily Kandinsky was one of many artists who taught at the Bauhaus before it was closed down by Nazi authorities in 1933. (To explore these artists further, your students may find it helpful to refer to Modern Art and Ideas 4.)

Looking Ahead

Direct your students to select one of the artists in this guide and follow the artist's career, beginning in the 1940s. What kind of art did he or she make? Students should describe the different mediums used by the artist. Students should compare and contrast one of the artist's later works with one of his or her earlier works. Are there any similarities or differences? Were there any factors that played an important role in the later work, such as historical events (for example, the impact of World War II) or personal experiences? How did people react to his or her work at the time? (Students may find it helpful to refer to other guides in the Modern Art and Ideas series.)

Literary Connections
Explore connections with writers who were contemporary to the artists presented in this guide, such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Hugo Ball, André Breton, Jean Cocteau, e. e. cummings, Max Jacob, James Joyce, and Tristan Tzara.

Many Dada and Surrealist artists and writers produced theatrical works, journals, manifestos, and sound poems, among other texts. Students should listen to and discuss archival recordings of Dada sound poetry by Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters, and others:

Ubu Web Sound MP3 Archive
www.ubu.com/mp3

Kurt Schwitters's "Ursonate"
http://www.kunstradio.at/PROJECTS/SCHWITTERS/EXHIBITS/
ursonate2.html

CD: Dachy, Marc, ed., *Dada Antidada Merz Arp/Schwitters/Hausmann* (Brussels: Sub Rosa, SR195)

CD: *Dada and Music* (Paris: MUZA, 2005)

Looking at European History
Dada was active from 1916 to 1924 in Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, Paris, and New York, and Surrealism was predominantly active in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. Divide your class into groups by city to conduct research on these centers of art during and between World Wars I and II. Have one group research New York, where many artists sought refuge from both wars. Each group should research important aspects of their city such as population, political leadership, industry, literature, and popular culture. Each group should present their findings to the class.

Surrealist Games
Divide your class into small groups to research games played by the Surrealists and their friends. Each group should research, present, and then lead the class in one game. It may be helpful to refer to *A Book of Surrealist Games* (1995), compiled by Alastair Brotchie and Mel Gooding (see "Readings on Surrealism," Selected Bibliography and Resources section, p. 25).

GLOSSARY

Abstract: A term generally used to describe art that is not representational or based on external sources of reality or nature.

Background: The part of a picture that appears furthest from the viewer; also, the area against which a figure or scene is placed.

Caricature: A rendering, usually a drawing, of a person or thing with exaggerated or distorted features, meant to satirize the subject.

Collage: The technique and resulting work of art in which fragments of paper and other materials are arranged and glued to a supporting surface.

Composition: The arrangement of elements within a work of art.

Costume: What a figure in a picture is wearing.

Expression: A facial aspect indicating an emotion.

Figurative: The representation of a form or figure in art that retains clear ties to the real world.

Foreground: The part of a picture that appears closest to the viewer.

Gesture: The placement of a figure's hands.

Iconoclasm: The doctrine, or practice, of attacking settled beliefs or institutions.

Iconography: Meaningful imagery or symbolism in a work of art.

Kinetic sculpture: Art that depends on motion.

Landscape: An image that has natural scenery as its primary focus.

Medium: The general or specific categorization of art based on the materials used (for example, painting [or specifically, watercolor], drawing, sculpture).

Merz: A term invented by the artist Kurt Schwitters to describe his collage and assemblage works made from scavenged fragments and objects.

Middle ground: The part of a picture that is between the foreground and background.

Opaque: Blocking the passage of light.

Perspective: A method employed to represent three-dimensional space on a flat surface or in relief sculpture. Also, a view, vista, or mental outlook.

Photogram: A cameraless photographic print that records the placement of objects and other elements on photosensitive paper that has been exposed to light.

Photomontage: A collage work that includes cut or torn-and-pasted photographs or photographic reproductions.

Pose: The way a figure is positioned.

Rayograph: A term invented by Man Ray to describe what is conventionally known as a photogram (see above).

Readymade: A word coined by Marcel Duchamp to describe mass-produced objects that he designated as art.

Tone: The lightness or darkness of a color.

Translucent: Permitting the passage of light.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
www.moma.org

MoMA's Red Studio
www.moma.org/redstudio

Grove Dictionary of Art Online (requires subscription)
www.groveart.com

History World
www.historyworld.net

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2006/dada/cities/index.shtm

The Science Museum, Making the Modern World
http://www.makingthemodernworld.org.uk

Ubu Web Sound MP3 Archive
www.ubu.com/mp3

WPS1 Art Radio: Historic Audio from the Archives of The Museum of Modern Art
www.wps1.org/include/shows/moma.html

ABOUT MoMA ARCHIVES

The Museum of Modern Art has a long and rich history of involvement in the careers of many modern artists. A department of Archives was established at MoMA in 1989 to preserve and make accessible to the public historical documents about the Museum and modern and contemporary art. If you would like to set up a workshop for students with a Museum archivist to look through and discuss primary documents of correspondence between the Museum's early directors, curators, and various artists, call (212) 708-9617 or e-mail archives@moma.org.

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