



OGDEN MUSEUM
OF SOUTHERN ART

OGDEN MUSEUM ONLINE LESSONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

VANESSA'S SECRETS | JEFFREY COOK



JEFFREY COOK, VANESSA'S SECRETS, 1999-2001, MIXED MEDIA, 2003.89.1

ABOUT THE ART

Notable for his found-object sculptures, Jeffrey Cook was a New Orleans-born artist who focused on nurturing a sense of space. After graduating from Xavier University – where he studied under the legendary artist John T. Scott – Cook became a professional dancer and traveled the world. Returning to New Orleans in the mid-'80s, Cook established a studio in Central City and began to tell the tale of the neighborhood's rise and fall with its debris and forgotten artifacts. Cook fused disparate, unrelated objects together to produce a sculpture completely distinct from its individual parts yet obviously borne from them. Some of Cook's assemblages resemble a human or other recognizable form while others are more indefinite. His work inherently represents certain spaces as much as the street or buildings would; they are of the place.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Cook artistically documented the city's lowest moment through its refuse. A rusted-out bicycle Cook found after the storm would become one of his most famous and enduring works. Through the Ogden Museum's *Artists and Sense of Place* program, Cook became an artist-in-residence at Guste Elementary where he used photography to turn buildings and streetscapes into works of art. Cook taught the students that beauty is everywhere, and the artist's job is to expose it. Jeffrey Cook died in 2009 at the age of 48.

ART ACTIVITY

OVERVIEW

Jeffrey Cook was an artist that took everyday objects and refuse and transformed them into new, layered, and complex pieces of art. In *Vanessa's Secrets*, Cook frames an interior rectangle, a journal, mummified in pink. Use this lesson to guide 2-8 grade students into making their own Paper Mache sculpture of secret thoughts and feelings.



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SUPPLIES

- Old cardboard boxes and scraps
- Lightweight found objects around the house or yard
- Newspaper
- Water
- Bucket or deep pan
- Liquid glue if you have it
- Scissors
- Pencil or pen
- Paint of any kind or markers
- Recycled paper from printer or other sources from around your home
- A flat table area where you can work on a covered surface (plastic tablecloth, plastic trash bag on top, etc.)
- Masking tape
- Optional glue gun and glue sticks

PROCESS

1. Ask students to take a few moments to sit comfortably with their eyes closed and take a few deep breaths. Ask them to think about three things that they deeply love and cherish. Have students write down at least three of their loves on three separate scraps of paper. These scraps will be integrated into their artwork later.
2. Now have students prepare the paper mache. Mix 1 cup flour with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white glue, and then slowly pour in about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water. Mix well to get out all the little clumps. Put the mixture to the side.
3. For the next step, have students begin to play with and organize different pieces of cardboard or found objects with one another. Arranging these objects until they find a composition they are happy with.
4. Ask students to attach the separate pieces of materials together using masking tape or hot glue (with the supervision of a parent or elder of course).
5. Once all of the pieces are securely attached to one another, have students rip strips of old printer paper or newspaper into strips.
6. Students then dip in one strip at a time to the paper mache, use their pointer and middle finger to pull off excess and then apply it to their form.
7. When students have covered the entire object with paper mache, have them go over it and rub down any loose or bunched up edges and corners. Now they can add their secret paper scraps somewhere into the work of art.
8. Let the object dry out in the sun for 24 hours.
9. On day 2 have students paint the object with a light wash, mixing paint with water and white. Set out to dry.
10. Have students create a title for their piece and sign and date the artwork on the back.





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KEY TERMS

Abstraction is a non-realistic style of art that uses colors, lines and shapes to express emotions and ideas.
Paper Mache a process of using paper or paper pulp and an adhesive like flour or glue to form a structure. A technique invented in China in 200 c.e.
Overlapping the placement of objects over one another in order to create the illusion of depth.
Texture the surface quality of the object
Depth making objects appear closer or farther away and making a two-dimensional image seem three-dimensional.
Found Object is art created from undisguised, but often modified, objects or products that are not normally considered materials from which art is made, often because they already have a non-art function.

***VANESSA'S SECRETS IN WHAT MUSIC IS WITHIN:
BLACK ABSTRACTION FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AT
THE OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART THROUGH JULY 5.***

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QUESTIONS? EMAIL EDUCATION@OGDENMUSEUM.ORG.