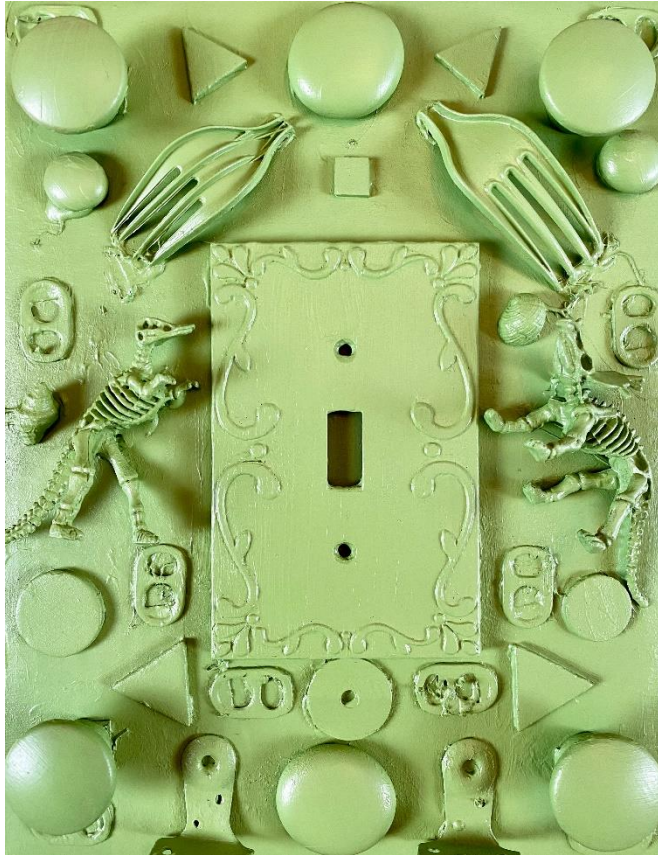


DAYTON ART INSTITUTE



Awesome Assemblage Art

Best for: grades 4-6

Description: learn about positive and negative space while using cardboard small found objects to create an original assemblage sculpture that features both 2D and 3D qualities.

Vocabulary: assemblage, sculpture, 2-dimensional, 3-dimensional, monochromatic

Required materials

- small shallow cardboard box
- cardboard scraps
- scissors
- masking or duct tape
- glue (or hot glue gun)
- acrylic or tempera paint
- scrap newspaper
- paintbrushes
- paint palette (or wax paper)
- small found objects such as buttons, knobs, nuts, or bolts, etc.

Optional materials

- spray paint



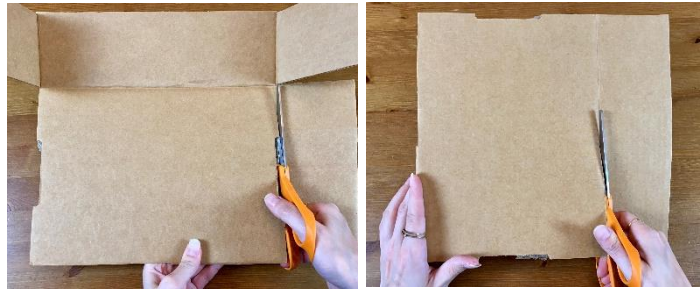
Image: Louise Nevelson (American, Ukrainian, 1900—1988), *Untitled*, 1985, wood and black paint. Museum purchase with funds provided by the James F. Dicke Family. 2003.7

DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

Instructions

1. **Assemblage** art is the term to describe art that is often made by taking found or “cast-off” materials—items that might otherwise be thrown away—and by creatively combining them in ways that might change their meaning. This process elevates “trash” to “treasure” and creates something new and artistic from something mundane or ordinary.

2. Take a small, shallow cardboard box and trim the edges so it becomes a flat, **2-D** surface. This will be your **background**.



3. Collect found materials from around the house for your **sculpture**. Search for items that you would not expect to see in art: wooden knobs, twisty ties, an old door or window handle, plastic silverware, a broken toy, nuts, bolts, springs, etc.

Note: tall items will display more **depth**, whereas shorter items will have more **2-dimensional** qualities.



4. On cardboard background, arrange found items in ways that seem interesting. Try at least 2 different arrangements before selecting a final design. Look for creative uses of the space—should this item be closer to or further from the corner? How tall or short should the surrounding objects be?

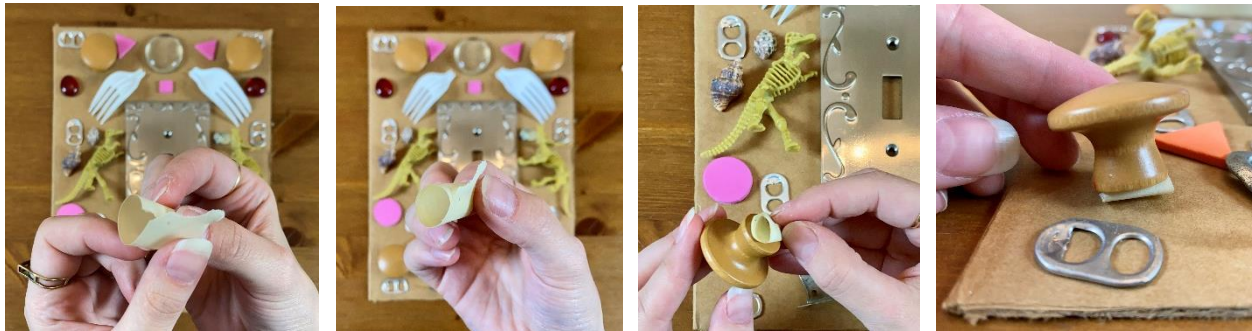


Helpful hint: consider the **negative space** (space around your objects) and the **positive space** (design created by the objects themselves.) Look for shadows created by the height of certain objects and notice how the **3-dimensional** quality is affected by the placement of objects.



DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

5. Use tape to hold your items down as you place others. Roll a small piece of tape, sticky end to sticky end, making it stick to itself. Instead of glue, tape can also be used to secure everything in place.



6. With the final design decided, prepare the surface by laying down newspaper and then begin to glue (or tape) everything else down. Allow glue to dry several hours or a full day.

Note: if using hot glue gun, use extreme caution and only small amounts of glue. Always place hot glue gun on its base, on top of paper, when not using. Never touch the glue tip of the gun or the glue itself. For extra safety, apply directly to board, then carefully attach objects to hot glue. Unplug if not using and ask an adult for help!



Helpful hint: if using Elmer's glue, apply glue very slowly so you can best sense which items may need more glue while others need less. Allow everything to dry fully. If needed, reinforce with masking tape connections are not strong enough.



7. Prepare your painting surface first by laying down newspaper underneath artwork. Decide on a specific paint color so your sculpture will feature a **monochromatic**, or single, color scheme. Mix colors to create your single color.



Have time for a [short survey](#)? Let us know how you're enjoying our digital resources!

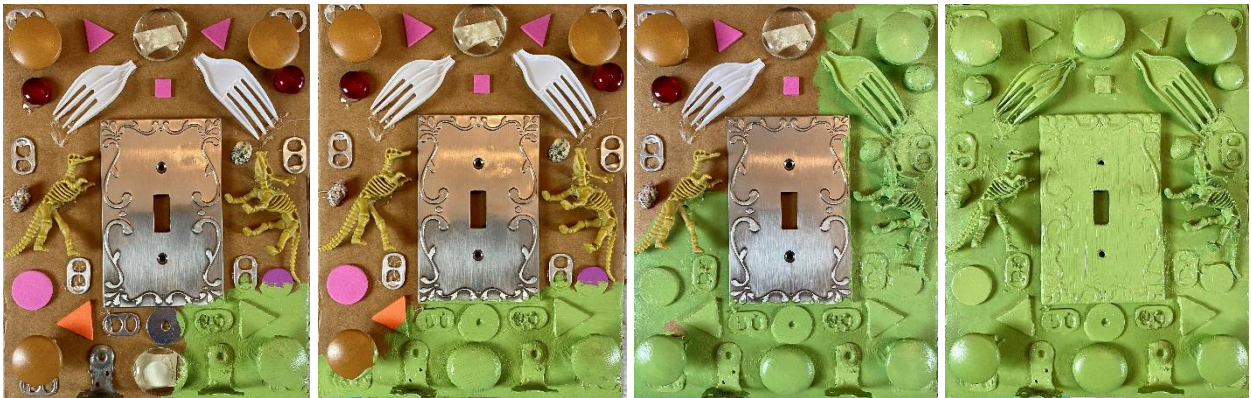
DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

8. With acrylic, paint the entire **assemblage**. Paint carefully as to not disturb the glue or accidentally loosen objects.

Note: some areas may require more paint than others. Pay special attention to the larger **3-D** objects that may not sit flat on your board's surface. Use a smaller brush to get the edges or undersides of objects.



9. Allow the first layer of paint to dry fully before adding another. You want your **sculpture** to have a full, even color, with little to no found items exposing their original colors.



Optional: if using spray paint, be sure to use outdoors or somewhere safely ventilated. Keep spray paint bottle tilted at least a 45° angle and 8–10" away from the artwork. Let coats dry about 5-10 minutes before adding the next. Use an adult for help!

- 10. Find a bookshelf or table surface to display your masterpiece!**

Extensions

For extra challenge:

1. After all glue has dried, apply an even layer of gesso prior to painting.
2. Experiment with a **monochromatic** color scheme made of at least 3 different **tints** (lighter) or **shades** (darker) of a single color.

For younger learners:

1. Pre-select found items for your young learner that are lighter-weight and easy to glue down. Provide an interpretative prompt to help guide the overall design process: if this artwork felt “excited” what would it look like? How could it “sound” most like your favorite song?



For a creative spin:

1. Create a fully 3-dimensional sculpture by making 5-6 assemblages and joining edges together to create a cube.
2. Swap cardboard for wood and use wood glue, nails, screws to stick items together.

Web Resources

[Downloadable assemblage art lesson from Dick Blick®](#)

[Video: learn more about artist Louise Nevelson](#)

[Louise Nevelson featured in MoMA Learning](#)

[Video: how-to process for assemblage art](#)

[Discover the history of assemblage art with MoCA L.A.](#)

