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art[®]

**ROBERT
RAUSCHENBERG**
**Working With
Found Objects**



On the Cover:



Why is the goat on our cover wearing an old tire? And what makes this a great work of art? Find out on pages 6-7.

Cover: Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), *Monogram*, 1955-1959. Oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, printed reproductions, metal, wood, rubber shoe heel, and tennis ball on canvas with oil on Angora goat and rubber tire on wood platform mounted on four casters, 42 x 63 1/4 x 64 1/2". Photograph: ©Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Collection of Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Art of the Real

"I think art is more like the real world when it's made out of the real world." –Robert Rauschenberg

W

hat do the artwork on this page and the one on the cover have in common? For starters, they were both constructed in

the late 1950s, and both took the art world by storm. Like all great artists, their young creator—Robert Rauschenberg (ROWSH-en-burg)—saw things in a new way and was not afraid to present his vision to the world.

In 1949, when 24-year-old Rauschenberg (opposite page, left) moved to New York City to begin

his art career, the older painter Willem de Kooning (VIL-em Deh KOON-eeng) (opposite page, right) was already a legend.

De Kooning was part of a group of painters who then dominated the art world. These painters were called Abstract Expressionists because their work didn't represent physical reality. Instead, it was made up of bold, spontaneous paint strokes that were seen as an expression of the painters' emotions. Rauschenberg's work was different. Instead of showing the inner world of his emotions, he wanted to show the physical world found right outside his door. So to create the piece on the left and the work on the cover, the artist brought real everyday objects into his art.

To make *Coca Cola Plan* (left),



► **Rauschenberg invented the term *Combine* to describe works like this one.**

Robert Rauschenberg, *Coca Cola Plan*, 1958. Combine: pencil on paper, oil on three Coca-Cola bottles, wood newel cap, and cast metal wings on wood structure, 26 3/4 x 25 1/4 x 5 1/2 in. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA). Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



▲ **Young Robert Rauschenberg in 1954 with one of his more unusual art materials—a stuffed rooster.**

Robert Rauschenberg, Self-portrait in his Fulton Street Studio, NYC. © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Rauschenberg used real Coca Cola bottles along with other found objects: a wooden stair-railing ornament, cast-metal wings, and some wooden boxes. To transform these objects into art, he mixed them with more-traditional art materials, such as pencil, paper, and oil paint. He applied paint to the Coca Cola bottles by using loose brush strokes to lay down thick layers, creating **rough textures** and colorful paint drips. He applied paint to the cover image in the same way. This style of painting is similar to the style that de Kooning and other Abstract Expressionists used. But with works like *Coca Cola Plan*, Rauschenberg had created an entirely new type of art.

Abstract Expressionist painters saw painting as something separate from sculpture. Rauschenberg's work combined painting and other **two-dimensional** elements, like drawing and *collage*, with **three-dimensional** elements, like found objects. Rauschenberg's Combines inspired later generations of artists by giving them the freedom to make art out of anything.

As he gained confidence in his new



▲ **In 1954, legendary Abstract Expressionist painter Willem de Kooning ruled the art world.**

Arnold Newman, Portrait of Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) with his paintings, 1959. Photo: © Arnold Newman/Getty Images.

approach to art, Rauschenberg decided to try something bold and symbolic: he wanted to completely erase one of de Kooning's drawings and present the result as a new work of art. De Kooning agreed to the project, but he didn't like it. He wanted to make sure the young artist had as hard a time as possible. So he gave Rauschenberg a drawing made with layers of oil paint, charcoal, pencil, and crayon. It took the young artist nearly a month and 17 different erasers to erase it. But when he was finished, he had given the art world something that he thought it needed: a clean slate.

A Personal Journey

“Every time I’ve moved, my work has changed radically.”
—Robert Rauschenberg

G

rowing up, Rauschenberg didn't get to see a lot of art. Born in 1925, he was raised in Port Arthur, Texas, a town built around oil refineries and power plants like the one where his father worked. But he was a natural artist. As a boy, he drew shapes and patterns all over the walls of the bedroom he shared with his sister. He also painted the furniture and built a room divider out of wooden crates, where he placed jars and boxes filled with found objects. Later, when he joined the Navy, he found some oil paints and made portraits of his fellow sailors. On his day off, he visited a museum for the first time and realized that he wanted to become an artist.

Rauschenberg came to New York City with dreams of making it in the art world. He was poor, sometimes living on only 25 cents a day, which was worth more than but not by much. Still, he loved the city. He loved its sharp contrasts: a 40-story building next to a tiny wooden shack; an empty parking lot next to a building filled with a maze of offices; the smell of coffee from a café



mixing with the smell of fish from a fish market. This **juxtaposition** and **overlapping** of mismatched things can also be seen in his Combines, which tell stories about the places he's been.

Satellite

Satellite (above), is made up of **fragmented images** that suggest Rauschenberg's Texas childhood. It's crowded and messy, like a lived-in home.

▲ **The warm colors, soft organic shapes, and complex patterns in the work above reflect the artist's childhood in the Texas countryside.**

Robert Rauschenberg, *Satellite*, 1955. Oil, fabric, paper and wood on canvas with stuffed pheasant. Overall: 79 3/8 x 43 1/4 x 5 5/8 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of Claire B. Zeisler and purchase with funds from the Mrs. Percy Ullis Purchase Fund. Photo: Kenneth Fernandez. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Scraps of **patterned** wallpaper (bottom left corner and top right corner), bits of lace (top half, right), and a **warm color scheme** (reds, yellows, oranges) also make the work feel homey. A newspaper comic strip that runs through the center of the image suggests childhood. Over it, a bright yellow stripe forms a kind of timeline. The wild pheasant walking along the top of the Combine might have walked through the yard of Rauschenberg's childhood home.

First Landing Jump

First Landing Jump (right), which suggests New York City, is made up of urban and industrial materials: a license plate, a tire, a striped road block, and a working light. It looks simpler than *Satellite* because the **contrast** between the dark and light parts of the Combine organizes the work into clear areas of **positive** and **negative space**. The black tire set against the light area **echoes** the white metal disk above, and **balances** the composition.

Canyon

Canyon (pages 8-9) tells a personal story. It is based on a Greek myth in which Zeus, the king of the gods, transforms himself into an eagle and carries a young boy up to heaven. In *Canyon*, the stuffed bald eagle with its wings spread represents Zeus, while the sack hanging from the bottom of the piece represents the young boy. What makes this work personal is the photo of a boy reaching upward (middle, left side). It is a photo of Rauschenberg's son, Christopher, who stayed with

his mother after she and Rauschenberg divorced. Maybe the swooping eagle represents Rauschenberg's desire to be reunited with his son. A bald eagle is also a symbol of America. Right next to the photo of Christopher, almost invisible under a thin layer of white paint, is a picture of the Statue of Liberty. The statue's raised arm and Christopher's raised arm form a **mirror image**. Is Rauschenberg also making a statement about life in America? His **layered imagery** inspires many readings.

▼ **The angular hard-edged shapes, stark black-and-white contrasts, and dynamic diagonals in the work below visually express Rauschenberg's move to New York City.**

Robert Rauschenberg, *First Landing Jump*, 1961. Combine painting: cloth, metal, leather, electric fixture, cable, and oil paint on composition board, with automobile tire and wood plank, 7' 5 1/8" x 6' x 8 7/8" in. Gift of Philip Johnson, 434,1972. The Museum of Modern Art. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Making a *Combine*

Robert Rauschenberg turns found objects into art

To find the objects he used in his art, Rauschenberg would go on walks around the streets of New York City. He had a rule for working with the objects he brought back to his studio. He had to transform them. The art that he made with them had to be at least as interesting as the scenes he saw when he looked outside his window.

On one of his walks, he noticed a stuffed goat standing outside an office-supply store and talked the storeowner into selling it to him. The goat was a great find, but it was hard to work with. At first, Rauschenberg tried hanging a flat artwork on a wall and attaching the goat to it (right). But the goat had so much character that it stood out from the work instead of becoming part of it.

Rauschenberg wanted to break up the goat's form to make it become part of a larger artwork, so he wrapped a tire around its middle. He stood it on the ground and placed the flat piece behind it. But this made the goat look as if it were hauling the piece instead of being part of it. Finally, Rauschenberg decided to lay the flat piece on the ground and stand the goat on top of it (opposite page). In this

setup, the goat looked natural and at home. By arranging and rearranging elements, Rauschenberg had created an urban nature scene: a goat grazing on a pasture made from objects found on the streets of New York City.

The **interlocking shapes** of the goat and tire suggest a *monogram*—a design made from two interlocking letters, usually someone's initials. Rauschenberg liked this idea so much that he called the finished work *Monogram*. To this day it remains his signature *Combine*.



▲ “All of my stories start with ‘I was on the street...’” —Robert Rauschenberg

Robert Rauschenberg, 1953. Photo: ©Allan Grant/Time & Life Pictures / Getty Images.

◀ In Rauschenberg's first version of *Monogram*, the goat didn't seem to be part of the artwork.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram*, first state, c. 1955. Oil, paper, fabric, and wood on canvas with stuffed Angora goat and three electric light fixtures. Approximately 75 x 46 1/2 x 12 in. No longer extant. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Rauschenberg used many different techniques to create *Monogram*:

VARIETY

Rauschenberg applied paint in a **variety** of ways. This detail shows how he brushed a thin, **transparent** layer of paint over the figure on the left, laid a thick, **opaque** stroke of orange paint on the right, and let some white paint drip down the center.



REPETITION

The artist **repeated** shapes to create **visual rhythm**. The curve of the figure on the left is echoed by the curved orange brushstroke on the right and the rounded heel in the center.

▼ **“He refused to be abstracted into art, so I put a tire around him, and everything went to rest.” –Robert Rauschenberg**



SYMBOLISM

Rauschenberg used **symbolic** images to create meaning. This tightrope walker might represent the delicate balance between **two-dimensional** and **three-dimensional** art.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram*, 1955-1959. Oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, printed reproductions, metal, wood, rubber shoe heel, and tennis ball on canvas with oil on Angora goat and rubber tire on wood platform mounted on four casters, 42 x 63 1/4 x 64 1/2". Photograph: ©Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Collection of Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

PERSONAL IMAGERY



By including actual footprints and other personal imagery in *Monogram*, Rauschenberg showed traces of real people in his art.

SCHOLASTIC

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MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #1

Canyon by Robert Rauschenberg





▲ “You begin with
the possibilities
of the materials,
then you let them do
what they can do.”

—Robert
Rauschenberg

Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon*, 1969. Combine painting, oil, pencil, paper, fabric, metal, cardboard box, printed paper, printed reproductions, photograph, wood panel, tube, and mirror on canvas, with oil on laid eagle, string, and pillow; 61 3/4 x 70 x 24 in. Courtesy Somabend Collection. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/
Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Lost and Found

Found objects express these three artists' worlds

Pablo Picasso

In 1950, the year he created *Baboon and Young* (right), Spanish artist Pablo Picasso was the most famous painter in the world. When he painted, he had always experimented with new styles and techniques. Now, he was experimenting with sculpture by using everyday household objects in unexpected ways.

At first glance, *Baboon and Young* shows a baboon holding its baby in its arms. But look just a little closer and you'll notice the baboon's head is actually a toy car. When he made the sculpture, Picasso was in his late 60s and had recently become a new father.

His studio, which was in his home, was filled with his son's toys. Picasso used those toys to create a comical sculpture expressing how strange it felt to be a new father at such an advanced age. The rest of the sculpture is made out of other objects Picasso found around his house: a round clay pot acts as the body, two cup handles form the ears, and a steel spring makes up the tail.



▼ Picasso with his son Claude.



Hannah Höch

If the word Dada doesn't mean anything to you, you're not alone. The artists who used the term to describe their style probably chose it because it was a nonsense word. Their movement began as a response to World War I (1914-1918), a brutal war that many thought was pointless. Later, these artists questioned and rebelled against the nonsense they saw in society.

▼ Self-portrait of Hannah Höch.



In the image to the right, German Dada artist Hannah Höch (Hock) questioned the purpose of fashion. She combined **fragmented images** she found in fashion magazines into a strange jumble that's anything but attractive. Let your eyes follow the thin red **outline** around the edge of the women's faces; you'll see that they join to form a man's head in profile. Why do you think Höch used found images instead of drawing to make her point?





▲ **Portrait of Basquiat**
by fellow artist
Andy Warhol.

**“I don’t think
about art while
I work.
I try to think
about life.”**
—Jean-Michel
Basquiat

Jean-Michel Basquiat

American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (BASS-kee-at) spent a great deal of time on the streets of New York City as a graffiti artist. At times, he was homeless. Born in 1960 into a middle-class Puerto Rican and Haitian family in Brooklyn, Basquiat began spray painting on Manhattan subways when he was 17 years old. A year later, he left home to try to become an artist. Inspired by the city streets, he painted on everything he could get his hands on: refrigerators, cardboard boxes, and doors.

The word *derelict* can mean “homeless person” or “something that has been thrown away.” Basquiat’s 1982 piece, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Derelict* (below), is a self-portrait painted on found doors. The rough surface of the doors, and the artist’s thick, sloppy brushstrokes, and **scratchy lines**

suggest the rough life of the city streets. Basquiat also used words and **symbols** to tell his story.

In the central panel, Basquiat drew two feet violently cut off at the ankles. Below that, on a patch of blue, he wrote the word ANKLE three times. He covered the last letters to form the word ANK or ANKH, the ancient Egyptian symbol of life. Slightly to the right, you can see a cross under the word MORTE, a word that means “death” in many languages. Above the cross is a **simplified** drawing of a tall building. On the right panel, the **stylized** face of the artist watches the story of life and death in the city play out.

Basquiat’s unusual style made him famous at a young age. Sadly, the real story of his life is all too short. He died in 1988 from a drug overdose at the age of 27.



Hannah Höch: Hannah Höch, Photo self-portrait, c. 1926. Hannah Höch (1889-1978), *Astronomy and Movement Dada*, 1922. Drawing, collage, .25 x .19 m. Private Collection, Berlin, Germany. Photo: Bridgeman-Giraudon / Art Resource, NY. Both Photos: ©2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/NG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Pablo Picasso: Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Baboon and Young*, October, 1951 (cast 1955). Bronze, after found objects, 21 x 13 1/4 x 20 3/4 in. The Museum of Modern Art, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. 196.1956, digital image: ©The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. ©2009 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Pablo & Claude Picasso, 1955. ©Bettmann / Corbis.

Jean-Michel Basquiat: *Jean-Michel Basquiat* by Andy Warhol. Photo: ©Andy Warhol Foundation / Corbis. ©2009 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts / ARS, New York. Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988), *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Derelict*, 1982. Acrylic, oil and oilstick on wood and metal, signed, titled and dated on the reverse, 80 x 82 in. Courtesy of Galerie Jerome de Noirmont ©2009 The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat / ADAGP, Paris / ARS, New York.

Transformations

Rylie Goddard turns trash into treasure.

Eighteen-year-old Rylie Goddard is always on the lookout for items that will make an interesting art piece. As a student at South Doyle High School in Knoxville, Tennessee, Rylie rescued some ink rollers from the art room trash and used them in his award-winning sculpture, *Turkey Fish 641C* (opposite page).

Today, Rylie is a freshman at Maryville College in Tennessee, where he is pursuing an art degree. After college, he plans to become a high school art teacher so that he can inspire students the way his high school teacher inspired him.

How did you first get involved in art?

Before high school, I didn't have much art skill. I couldn't draw and never dreamed of being an artist. Mr. Hickman, my high school art teacher, introduced me to a wide range of artists' works and showed me that drawing and painting were not the only ways to make art. By introducing me to different techniques, like working with found objects, he sparked my creativity.

Where did the idea for your piece come from?

I was carving a post on a wood lathe when Mr. Hickman suggested I use it to make a sculpture. I did some research and found artists who worked with carved wood, including one who worked by putting things in boxes. That's how I got the idea to put a box on top of the post.



How did your idea develop from there?

I thought the box would make a perfect home for a bird. As I found objects, I chose ones that might build on that theme. I found a nest in a tree right outside the art room and placed it in the box on top of a scrap of old carpet. I tried to make the ink rollers look like leaves falling off a tree. I added branches, pinecones, and two eggs I had speckled with paint. To create the other nest on the side of the box, I cut a bowl in half and added a piece of myself—some hair I had saved from a haircut. I added the light fixture to give the piece a break from nature and to suggest the modern industrial world.

How did you decide where to place these objects?

I positioned the box off-center to create visual interest. Once the box was in place, it fueled where I placed everything else. I kept adding layers and layers to create a sense of balance, even though nothing is truly balanced in the sculpture.

What do these objects mean to you?

They're meaningful on a personal level. My hair is in it. So is my love of nature.

↑ "I wanted to show people that it's possible to create something meaningful from objects that most people see as trash."

Photo: Courtesy of Rylie Goddard.

→ "I thought the box would make a perfect home for a bird. As I found objects, I selected ones that might build on that theme."

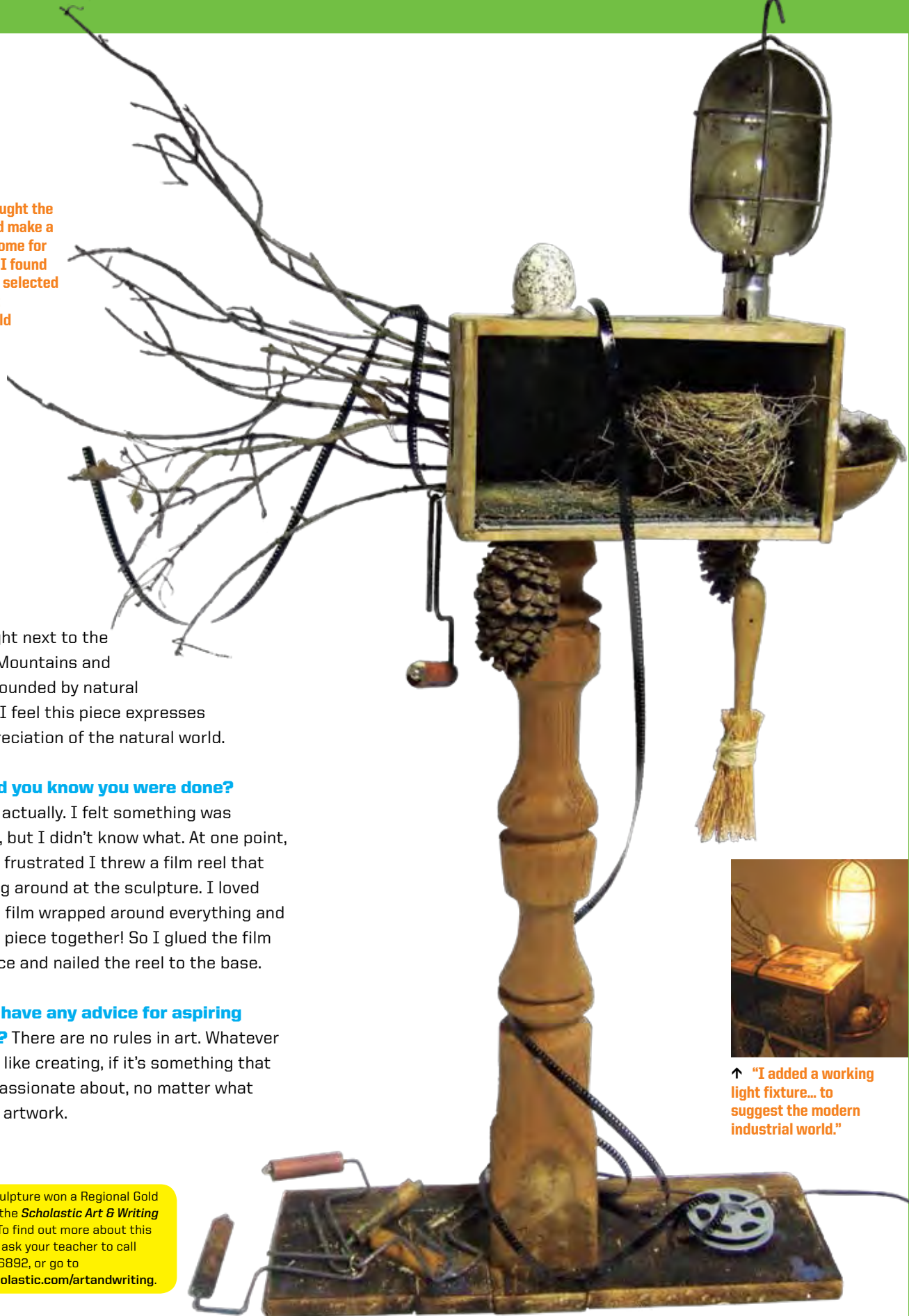
I live right next to the Smoky Mountains and am surrounded by natural beauty. I feel this piece expresses my appreciation of the natural world.

How did you know you were done?

I didn't, actually. I felt something was missing, but I didn't know what. At one point, I got so frustrated I threw a film reel that was lying around at the sculpture. I loved how the film wrapped around everything and tied the piece together! So I glued the film into place and nailed the reel to the base.

Do you have any advice for aspiring artists? There are no rules in art. Whatever you feel like creating, if it's something that you're passionate about, no matter what it is, it's artwork.

Rylie's sculpture won a Regional Gold Award in the *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards*. To find out more about this program, ask your teacher to call 212-343-6892, or go to www.scholastic.com/artandwriting.



↑ "I added a working light fixture... to suggest the modern industrial world."

Create A Combine

Collect images and found objects, then turn them into a work of art

MATERIALS

- 3-D found objects
- 2-D personal images (like photographs)
- Print materials (like magazines, newspapers, and comic books)
- Variety of 2-D material (like wallpaper, fabric, construction paper, etc.)
- Access to a photocopier
- Stencils
- Cardboard boxes
- Scissors and X-ACTO knives
- Tempera or Blickrylic paint (primary and secondary colors)
- Palettes
- Water containers
- Various round and flat brushes
- Elmer's glue and hot glue gun
- Heavy thread (to help attach large objects)

Y

ou've seen in this issue how Robert Rauschenberg combined found objects with traditional art materials to create art that reflects his environment. For this workshop, you'll create your own *Combine*.

STEP 1 Gather Your Materials



What are the images that make up your world? Start by selecting photos, socks, shirts, or any other objects, you find meaningful. Then, clip images that relate to your found objects from magazines, newspapers, and comic books. Gather additional two-dimensional materials, like scraps of wallpaper, colored paper, etc. Finally, find a cardboard piece to use as a base. **TIP: If you don't want to damage your photographs, use photocopies instead. You can also use a photocopier to play with scale by enlarging or shrinking images.**

STEP 2 Compose the Image



Think about whether you want a vertical or horizontal composition. Begin laying out your objects, images, and materials. (Cut out images as needed.) Let your ideas develop



↑ These students are experimenting with different compositions by arranging and rearranging images.

as you arrange your images. Consider using three-dimensional objects to extend flat images—for example, paste real peanuts over a flat image of peanuts (see Elliot's *Combine*). You can create a relief effect by pasting a backing behind some flat images. Consider tearing off the top layer of cardboard to reveal the texture underneath (see Allison's *Combine*). Once you're happy with the composition, glue down your elements. **TIP: Pay attention to images like eyes and hands, which can lead a viewer's gaze around the composition (see Elliot's *Combine*).**

STEP 3 Paint the Image



Choose or mix paint colors that will contrast with or unify the elements in your composition. On a separate piece of paper, experiment with a variety of techniques. Try applying paint in thin layers, thick layers, fluid strokes, drybrush, drips, etc. When

→ **Makenzi's Combine**
Makenzi made her Combine personal and engaging by using images of friends who look directly out at the viewer. She let the printed images on her cardboard base show through to complement her theme of bubblegum fun.

↓ **Elliot's Combine**
Can you spot the three-dimensional object in this Combine? Elliot has glued real peanuts onto a two-dimensional image of a peanut can. He used photocopied images of people to create focal points that lead the viewer's eye around the composition.



you're ready to paint, begin with broad, bold strokes, then go in with smaller strokes. Consider letting some of the cardboard base show through (see Makenzi's Combine). Remember, brushstrokes can define the edges of an image, break the image, and create movement and visual rhythm.

TIP: You need only a few bright colors to create a dramatic image. Don't overmix or overwork your paint.

↗ **Tyler & Katie's Combine**
Tyler and Katie layered colored paper, photocopies, playing cards, and paint. The white paint drips draw the viewer's eyes down to the football player.

→ **Allison's Combine**
Allison tore off a layer of cardboard to reveal the texture underneath.





Graphic Designer

Charles Wilkin makes his living doing what he loves. Find out how he turned his interest in art into a rewarding career.

↓ **Illustration for the *New York Times* Thursday Styles section.**

CAREER PROFILE: GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Salary: First-year graphic designers make an average of \$35,000, depending on location, company size, and experience.

Education: Most graphic designers have a bachelor's degree in fine arts or graphic design.

Getting Started Now:

- ▶ "Learn as much as you can," Charles advises. Take every art class and art history class your school offers. Consider taking outside art classes at a vocational school or community college.
- ▶ Be creative outside of school. "I always have a camera in my pocket," Charles says.
- ▶ Ask your art teachers for help building an art portfolio for college. Create a Web site for your portfolio.
- ▶ Research schools and scholarship opportunities.

ART MAGAZINE: What is your job?

CHARLES WILKIN: I'm a graphic designer. I own and run my own studio, so I'm also a creative director, art director, illustrator, and manager. I wear all the hats!

AM: What kind of projects do you do?

CW: Mostly, I design for books, magazines, catalogs, and advertising. I also work on interactive projects, such as Web sites.

AM: When did you know this was the career for you?

CW: When I reached 11th grade, I realized that I had taken all the art classes that my school offered, so I took art classes at a vocational school. That's where I took my first commercial art class and really got into it.

AM: What is your artistic process?

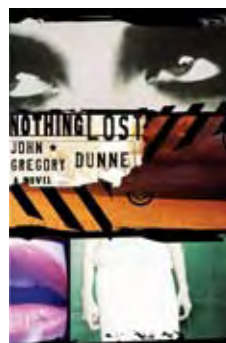
CW: I'm always looking to fine art for inspiration with my graphic design. Rauschenberg has been a huge influence. Like his, my style can feel gritty and hand-made. I find objects that don't go together and combine them to create something different and unexpected.

AM: What skills do you need to succeed?

CW: You need to be self-motivated, organized, and open-minded. Projects can change suddenly, and you need to be able to adapt. You also need to be willing to explore ideas that you don't like, because a client might have a specific request for a project. You need to



LiMiTeD*Too



↑ **Book cover design for Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.**

↑ **Logo design for Limited Too.**



↑ **Logo design for Totes Kids.**

make connections. Most of my clients were referred to me by people I know.

AM: What's the best part of your job?

CW: I love coming up with ideas and solving design problems. I chose graphic design over fine art because I love problem solving.

All photos and artwork on this page courtesy of Charles Wilkin.