



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

High-school students will ...

- draw from observation.
- render portions of the object.
- experiment with a variety of media and techniques.
- use chosen media to suggest movement.
- use foreshortening to give the illusion that the object is coming towards us.
- write an homage to their final piece (prose or poem).

MATERIALS

- Various kitchen utensils
- Pencil
- Newsprint
- Ink, brush, pen nibs
- Gesso
- Staedtler eraser/kneaded eraser
- Drawing paper or illustration board
- Charcoal, litho crayon, white pastel, graphite sticks

< Dave (wing corkscrew).

Art's in the Kitchen

by Geri Greenman

Inspired by *Untitled (Five-bladed Saw)* from artist Jim Dine's *Untitled Tool Series* (1973), I gave my students an assignment "in the manner of" so they too could give a sense of monumentality and awe-inspiring presence to an object that is considered ordinary, and ordinarily overlooked for its lack of presence.

We often take for granted the myriad objects drawn, designed and created to be functional and of use to us in our daily lives. This was the focus for this particular assignment: to allow these "taken for granted" objects of ease to be recognized for their beauty and value to us.

Dine often used a contour line drawing to get the shape of an object on paper. We also used this technique, discussing how we could take a seemingly simple kitchen utensil and give it a real sense of importance through our skills.

We took into consideration the placement of the object on the page, as well as the direction the object appeared to be coming toward us; both decisions were important compositional concerns.



We were also concerned with using our foreshortening skills so that the utensil appeared to be projected toward the viewer, thereby giving us an immediate response to the object. This was very difficult for the majority of the students because they followed my directions in choosing interesting and unique objects found in the kitchen!

Many of the utensils were antiques and had uses I could only guess at; several of the tools were complicated giz-



^ Michelle (slotted spatula).

< Megan (can/bottle opener).

mos with twisting, turning blades or spiraling stems that really challenged the students' drawing and observation skills.

Once the students successfully drew their utensil from the direction that most intrigued and challenged the viewer, we concentrated on "rendering" part, if not most, of the object. Jim Dine often used a background treatment to effectively allow the actual object to become the "negative" space, and then he'd render, beautifully shading and modeling to describe its roundness and texture.

To further test the skills and imaginations of my students, I put out a host of art materials—charcoal, litho crayon, gesso, graphite sticks, white pastel, ink, water and so on. I did a little demo and showed a series of drawings done using all of those materials at different stages, and how one could achieve a soft line one way and a hard edge at another time or stage.

It's interesting that some "looks" see **KITCHEN** on page 47



Go to artsandactivities.com and click on this button for the hyperlink to several works from Jim Dine's *Untitled Tool Series*.

KITCHEN

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can be achieved only through the mixing of these different media, and that can only be understood through experimentation. The students who took the time to experience these materials and learned to get certain effects with them were, I think, pleased with the unusual effects.

I discussed how primitive, elemental and "human" the basic need to "mark-make" really is, and how important it is in creating a dramatic and powerful image.

Oftentimes, utilitarian objects are considered unimportant as a subject for a fine drawing or painting, but I wanted my students to understand that the subject matter isn't always as important as the way in which the artist brings it to life with their skills. Regardless of the various media, the use of lighting, size and the suggestion of movement can bring any ordinary subject into high art.

The students learned how powerful the artist really is in taking something mundane and ordinary and giving it a new image—one that everyone takes note of, seeing it differently, accepting its beauty within its seemingly simple design.

Many of the finished drawings gave these objects a feeling of projecting and hurtling thorough space. The mark-making in the background suggests atmosphere and environment, giving a visual rhythm to their action. A few students drew corkscrews and the way they are handled makes them look as though they are turning and catapulting through space! They're immensely effective.

The students developed their compositions starring these utensils from the kitchen, giving them a sense of presence and beauty previously unacknowledged.

I encouraged them to complete their assignment by writing a poem, prose or short story about the object's beauty, design, its function and our need for the utensil.

We all learned the names and uses of many objects we had never seen before, but more importantly, we drew, composed, wrote and created magnificent drawings paying homage to the ordinary. And, for a time, art was in the kitchen. ■

Now retired, Geri Greenman was art department head at Willowbrook High School in Villa Park, Illinois. She currently serves as a Contributing Editor at Arts & Activities.

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