

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upper-elementary students will ...

- understand and apply media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts.
- know how to use the structures and functions of art.
- know a range of subject matter, symbols and potential ideas in the visual arts.
- understand the visual arts in relation to historical figures.
- understand the characteristics and merits of one's own work and the work of others.

Wolf at night >
Giraffe >



WHAT'S REALLY IN A HAND?

Mind Over Matter

by Karen Skophammer



^ Turtle
< Elephant

MATERIALS

- Hands
- Washable markers
- 12" x 18" drawing paper
- Crayons, markers and/or colored pencils

Have you ever looked up at the clouds and imagined what each cloud looked like? When I was a child, my sisters and I would be lying on our backs looking into the sky and we'd see all sorts of things made from clouds ... animals, people, airplanes, sometimes entire cities! We'd lie there and tell each other stories about the scenes we saw in the clouds. What was amazing was the fact that the clouds would move in slow motion and our stories would actually move!

Sometimes we'd have to convince each other that "our cloud" was what we said it was, and not the other's creation, but what did it matter? It was the imagination and creativity that mattered.

Little did we know that many famous people before us and many famous people after us had engaged in this same exercise. What's more, many people who saw other things in a different way were exercising their creative nature.

For instance, famous painter Romare Bearden sometimes couldn't get inspired to paint. His cleaning lady noticed he couldn't get inspired and said he should paint her. Well, this cleaning lady was a haggard street lady that he had rescued,

and he was thinking she was not exactly fodder for painting. The cleaning lady seemingly read his mind and said to him, "When you can look into me and find what is beautiful, you'll be able to paint something." Guess what? He was inspired and he never forgot the lesson his simple cleaning lady taught him.

Pablo Picasso had his own way of seeing things, too. This made math in school hard for him because instead of seeing

see **HAND** on page 65

HAND

continued from page 26
37

used them as the beginnings of drawings. However, he used this hardship in math to help him in painting and abstracting his images.

George de Mestral was walking one day and had cockleburs stuck to his clothing. He wondered why they stuck, so he examined them with a microscope. He saw they actually had tiny hooks on the end of them that made them cling to his clothing. He used this to develop Velcro®!

Where am I going with all of this? We take everyday objects for granted. To get my students' creative juices flowing, I talked to them about clouds and most of them could relate to that. Then I had them look at their hands. I asked them to look at the back, at the palm and to position their hands in different positions. What else could their hands be other than a hand? How could they position their hands to form the beak of an animal, maybe a duck? The kids loved this! We used washable markers to draw on our hands to get the "feel" for the excitement of turning our hands into some-

thing else with our minds.

Next, each student was given a 12" x 18" sheet of drawing paper. I asked the students to draw a creative "hand picture" complete with background. Some students drew two! These were then colored with markers, crayons, colored pencils or any combination of these materials.

We had turtles, giraffes, elephants, eagles, fish, wolves, buzzards, unicorns and a few people that were drawn using different hand positions.

I told the kids they could see with their eyes or they could see with their imaginations. In other words, if we see only with our eyes, we see something for what it is—we see an apple is an apple. But if we see with our imagination, using mind over matter, that apple can become an animal, a building, a car or any number of other things.

This art experience really gets the creative juices flowing! I think it's one you'll like trying with your students. Plus, it uses very few materials. ■

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