

# LESSON PLAN



## DARK ART

### DESCRIPTION

This sculpture lesson will reconsider the rules of beauty in art through exploring works that are considered “dark” in mood, tone, composition, and/or meaning.

### STUDENT AGE/GRADE LEVEL

Grade 7, Grade 8, Beginning High School

### OBJECTIVE

Upon completing the lesson, students will be able to explain how composition, materials, and subject matter can impact the tone/mood/theme/perception of artwork, and create their own “dark art” sculpture.

### RELATED ARTISTS

Lee Bontecou, Don Drumm, Robert Arneson

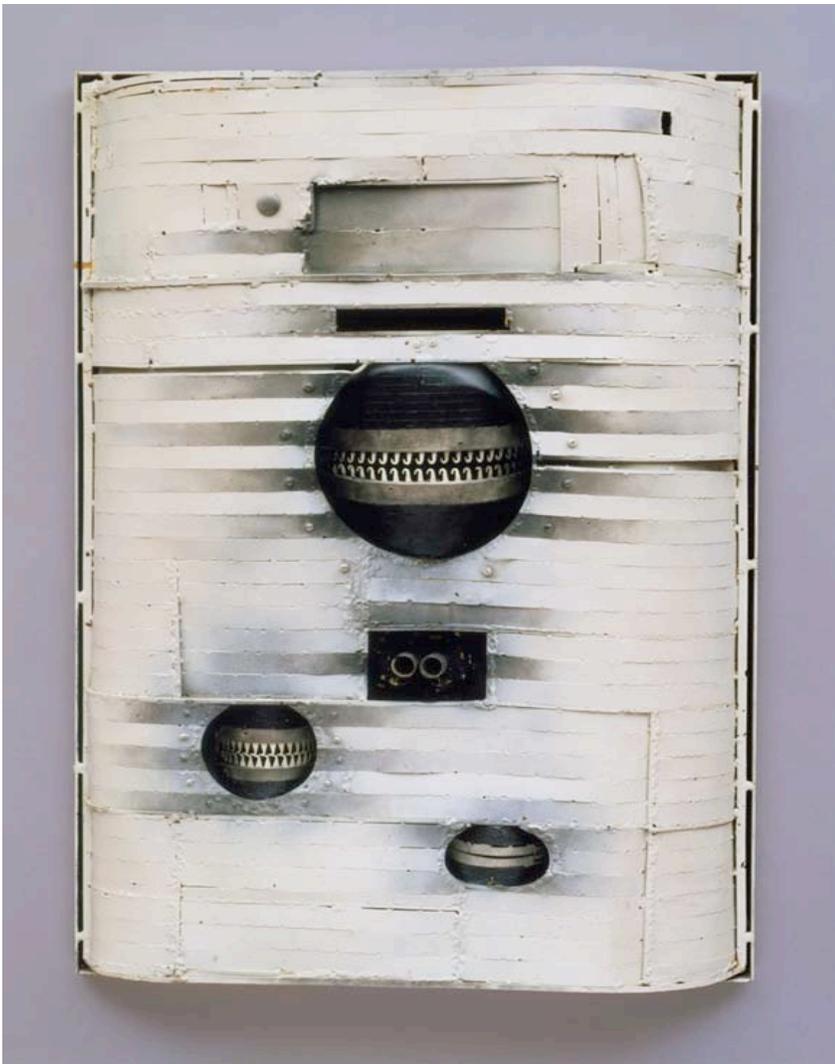


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## RELATED WORKS



### **Lee Bontecou** ***Untitled*, 1966**

Painted iron, fiberglass, and fabric. 41 in. x 29 in. x 8 in. (104.14 cm x 73.66 cm x 20.32cm). Gift of Leo Castelli, Castelli Galleries. 1974.122

NOTES: Bontecou has always been deeply affected by social issues, war and politics. In her sculpture of the sixties, including this work, she expressed those attitudes through her choice of materials and an abstract visual language: the grid of entrapment, sharp edges that "mentally scrape the viewer" and ominous black openings.

DISCUSSION PROMPT: How does personal experience shape art? Are there times when art can be separate from personal influence? How does personal experience and perspective improve or devalue art? What effect does the art have on the viewer when they do not know the background influences vs. when they do?

WRITING PROMPT: What personal factors and experiences do you draw upon when you make art? Create a list of 10 things that could answer this question. Using the 10 things, construct a mock-food pyramid that puts all the answers in order from most important (on the bottom in the biggest section) to the least important (on the top in the smallest section). Compare with other classmates to see how influences differ for each person.

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### Don Drumm

#### *Bull Connor's Dog*, 1963

Cast aluminum. 32 1/2 in. x 55 in. x 19 in. (82.55 cm x 139.7 cm x 48.26 cm). Gift of Lisa and Don Drumm. 2006.38

NOTES: Bull Connor's Dog at first appears humorous, but its spiky forms and large teeth, as well as its name, suggest a darker side. Eugene "Bull" Connor was the Public Safety Commissioner of Birmingham, Alabama, who used fire hoses and dogs against Civil Rights demonstrators in the 1960s. Shown on national television, this violent response to the protesters is widely believed to have swayed national opinion in favor of passage the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

DISCUSSION PROMPT: Is media as a whole more positive or negative? How does this affect interpretation of the facts? What should we, as consumers of media, remember about what we are hearing, seeing, and reading? When has something positive come out of something negative? How do we utilize "bad news" for good?

WRITING PROMPT: Create a pretend newspaper article describing a real event that has happened in your life. Report possible interviews of people who may have been involved and create an image or political cartoon that could go with the article.



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### Robert Arneson

#### *Nuke News*, 1983.

Bronze. 19 in. x 22 in. x 28 1/8 in.  
(48.26 cm x 55.88 cm x 71.44 cm).

Purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts Purchase Plan Program and the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation. 1990.11



NOTES: Robert Arneson is perhaps best known for his work in ceramic, but in the 1980s he produced some of his most powerful work in bronze. 'Nuke News', a witty if gruesome commentary on nuclear war, is inscribed with the names of the physicists responsible for creating the atom bomb as well as epithets, colloquial phrases and the nicknames of the bombs deployed over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS: *Nuke News* contradicts the propaganda citizens often face during war. How would this art have impacted Americans if it were created during World War II? Think of other times in history where different perspectives have shaped outcomes. What were the positive results, and what were the negative results? How do gaps in perspective like this affect society? How would the world be different (better or worse) if there were not those gaps?

WRITING PROMPT: Think of a time when you failed to see the other side of the story. What was/were the other person/people trying to tell you? How would the situation change if you saw it from a different point of view? Construct a short dialogue for you and the other person in which you each express what you believe but still come to a solution.

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### SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- Found objects including: Wire, Aluminum, Foam, String, Vellum, Various Fabrics in Monochromatic Colors, Nuts and Bolts and Similar Items
- Black and White Acrylic Paint
- Mid-temperature Hot Glue Gun, Glue, Staples, Sewing Supplies, Scissors, Wire Cutters, Needle-nose Pliers, Duct Tape

### PROCEDURE

**DISCUSSION:** Students will respond to the artworks based on the suggested discussion prompts or creative writing activities. Students will discover information about the artists, their styles and usual themes, and any information specific to the work shown. Students will compare and contrast the artworks while discussing the tone and mood of the artworks.

**STUDIO:** Students will construct a personal sculpture that is “dark” through usage of materials, composition and/or subject matter. To begin, students will brainstorm a topic for their sculpture through sketches and research of current events in newspapers/magazines, or websites. Students will consider whether their sculpture will be abstract or concrete in depicting their topic. Students will use found objects (suggestions above) to create a sculpture; selecting objects of varying sizes and textures to create a 3-D composition. Adhering the objects will require a variety of techniques including hot glue, tape or bending wire with pliers. Students will need to decide which technique works best for their objects. Students will choose paint colors to be dark or monochromatic. Students will write an artist statement that reflects on tone, mood or subject matter of their artwork.

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### MODEL STUDIO PROJECT



### ODE VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

	Perceiving/Knowing	Producing/Performing	Responding/Reflecting
Grade 7	1PE, 5PE	2PR, 4PR	2RE, 3RE
Grade 8	1PE, 5PE	2PR, 3PR	1RE, 4RE
High School Beginning	3PE, 4PE	1PR, 2PR	1RE, 3RE

*For additional teacher resources or to schedule a tour, visit <http://akronartmuseum.org/educators/>*

*To find out more information about artworks in the collection, <http://akronartmuseum.org/collection/>*