

# Fooling the Eye

## TROMPE L'OEIL AT THE SPRINGVILLE MUSEUM

### Questions for Looking

#### Artists:

1. [Gregory L. Abbott](#)
2. [Joseph Kerby](#)
3. [Martin Lenzi](#)
4. [Charles Peterson](#)
5. [Edith T. Roberson](#)
6. [Roger D. "Sam" Wilson](#)

**ARTIST:** Gregory L. Abbott (1945- )  
Salt Lake City/St. George, Utah

**TITLE:** *Sacred Cows of Art History: At the End of Innocence—Homage to Kurt Schwitters 1986*

**MEDIA:** mixed media

[click image to enlarge] **SIZE:** 23" x 39-1/4"

### QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, aesthetics, criticism)

When do you think this art work was made? Why? What style painting is this? (Surrealist, using trompe l'oeil) When was Surrealism popular? (1920s and 30s, quite a while ago) Do you know any other surrealists? (Ernst, \*Dali, Miro, Magritte. \*Dali is the artist students are most likely to know, especially his images of melting clocks) What media has Abbott used?

How does this painting make you feel? What do you think it means? What do the cows stand for? (hint: look at the title) Abbott has done quite a few paintings with cows in them, why do you think he chose cows as his *everyman* image or symbol? What does innocence mean? How can you lose your innocence? How is Abbott saying we might lose our innocence? (tie this into Kurt Schwitters' history. See the section about Kurt Schwitters in the Biographical Information.) Why are some of the cows flat cutouts and one cow realistic-looking? (If students do not pick up on it themselves, point out that it is a "cow-uch" the cow is looking at. See Biographical Information) Why do you think the

artist used mixed media instead of the oils or acrylics he usually uses? What effects or qualities has the media produced?

Does Abbott's painting make you think? Do you feel this is a successful piece of art? Why or why not? Do you like this painting? Why?

## ACTIVITIES

### Art

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of the Merz form of art by making their own Merz collages.

Materials:

- examples of artworks that employ collage (artworks often have some collage but are not made just using collage)
- various types of refuse
- acrylic painting medium to glue papers on with. (can be bought from art supply stores or from catalogs)
- inexpensive brushes for applying medium
- wire for attaching objects
- sturdy paper or cardboard for the backing of the collage
- scissors and pliers
- cheap paper for planning collage

Show the students the slide of *Cows of Art History: At the End of Innocence*. Point out the phrase at the top that says "homage to Kurt Schwitters." Tell the class briefly about Kurt Schwitters and Merz, and about collage in general. (Abbott, Biographical Information) Show the students some examples of collage.

Give the students at least one day to collect refuse for their collages. You may want to bring some additional material. Have the students arrange their refuse in a specific way. They can focus on color, texture, shape, or on any other design element, or can make a design that has a social message. Remind the students to look at their pieces from different angles as they arrange the individual items, so the design as a whole is pleasing or interesting and has a focal point.

If your class has had a lesson on the elements and principles of design, or you wish to focus on one of those elements or principles, this lesson can easily be adapted to fit a particular focus or to use all the elements and principles. Just discuss the element(s) or principle(s) you wish to focus on and then assign the students to arrange their collages to demonstrate that element or principle, or to be a good example of the use of all of them.

If you have not made collages yourself, make one or two so you are familiar with the techniques. Making a couple samples will help you understand the complexity of design possible and the unique characteristics of collage as well as giving you examples to show the class.

Give each student a piece of cheap paper and let each choose several items from the collections. Student should plan out their collages by placing the individual pieces on the cheap paper, arranging and rearranging them until they have a composition they like. The items can be trimmed to whatever size or shape suits the design. After the students have decided on the arrangement of items, they can attach the individual pieces to a sheet of cardboard or heavy paper with glue, \*acrylic medium or any method that will work. Have the students compare and contrast the various solutions.

\*Attach paper to the backing with acrylic medium by brushing a thin coat of the medium over the backing, laying the papers to be attached on the backing and then brushing another coat of medium over the papers. Make sure the coats of medium are thin. If the medium is too thick, thin it with water. If the students are only attaching papers to part of the backing and are attaching objects to other areas, they should still brush a solid coat on the backing. This will help prevent buckling of the backing. For collages that use only two-dimensional materials, after the top layer of medium is no longer tacky, place a piece of plastic wrap over the collages and weight them so they will dry flat, or, put the finished collages through a printing press, protecting the blanket from the medium with plastic wrap.

### Art

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of Surrealism by creating a surrealist painting of their own.

Materials:

paper

crayons, pastels, or paint—poster, watercolor, acrylic, etc.

Show the slide of *Cows of Art History: at the End of Innocence*. Have a class lecture / discussion about Surrealism, which was a movement that attempted to resolve the apparent conflicts between dreams and reality and merge these two states in a new "super-reality". (Any modern art history book will provide additional information, as will encyclopedias or The Oxford Dictionary of Art) Show slides or pictures of other Surrealist paintings, if possible. You should be able to find some examples of works by such artists as Ernst, Masson, Miro, Dali, and Magritte. (Magritte particularly fits the category of an artist who is a Surrealist who employs some trompe l'oeil elements in his work)

Have the students identify ways in which Abbott's piece fits the definition of Surrealism. Then have the students each plan their own Surrealist paintings. They can either plan the paintings carefully and draw the images first, or they can do quickly executed, unplanned paintings—both approaches were used by various Surrealist artists. Remind the students

to try to capture the feelings of both the real world and a dream state. Display the finished paintings with a brief explanation of Surrealism, to help viewers understand the paintings.

### **Language Arts/Art**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of puns by writing and illustrating their own puns.

Materials:  
pencils or pens  
paper

Show the students the slide of *Cows of Art History: At the End of Innocence*. Ask the students what a pun is, and if necessary, explain. Ask the students to find any visual puns they can in Abbott's piece. Then have the students make up puns. If you want, the students can also illustrate their puns. Have the students show just the illustrations and see if the class can find the intended puns. Can they find any other puns that weren't intended, but are in the drawings? (see "Puntoons" by Jack Medoff, Running Press; Philadelphia, PA, 1992, for some simple examples)

### **Language Arts**

**Objective:** Use the slide of *Cows of Art History: at the End of Innocence* as an Anticipatory Set for a literature selection with the theme of loss of innocence.

Show the class the slide and tell them the title of the work. Briefly discuss what kind of loss of innocence Abbott is thinking about. Then have the students read the literature selection. Show the slide again and contrast and compare the two views of loss of innocence.

### **Science**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of the properties of light by watching and/or participating in experiments that demonstrate these properties.

Show the class the slide of *Cows of Art History: at the End of Innocence* and discuss how the art work uses *paradox*—a statement that seems contradictory, but may be true, or a statement or object that means more than one thing at a time. For example, the cow that looks real but is really part of a painting; the real-looking cow, as opposed to the two cutouts, none of which are real; the cow in the living room that is a symbol for everyman, but is also an out-of-place cow; the couch that is covered in cow hide, etc.

When the students have understood and found as many examples of paradox as they can, broaden the discussion to include the real world. Encourage the students to think of several things or behaviors that are paradoxical. Then introduce light and the paradoxical properties of light, how it behaves both as a particle and as a wave. Use experiments from your own science textbook or any age-appropriate source to demonstrate these two

apparently conflicting properties, or any of the various properties of light. If possible, have the students perform or help with the experiments.

## Vocabulary

Collage—A technique in which the artist uses newspaper cuttings, photographs, and other usually two-dimensional objects and glues them to a flat backing. Collages generally also have painted sections or passages.

**ARTIST:** Joseph Kerby (1857-1911)  
Park City, Utah

**TITLE:** *Design for Drop-Curtain, Park City Opera House 1890*

**MEDIA:** oil on canvas

[click image to enlarge] **SIZE:** 36-1/8" x 48-1/4"

## QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

What is this a painting of? Why do you think so many early Utah artists painted scenery for the theaters and opera houses? What does this painting tell you about what opera is like?

This painting is a kind of trompe l'oeil artwork. Tell the students some information about trompe l'oeil in general. Trompe l'oeil art tries to make viewers' eyes think the things they see in the paintings are actually real objects. Why would artists want to do that? What other kinds of art look real? What helps make the scene in this painting look real?

Art that tries to look real is called mimetic art because it "mimics" nature. If you use that standard, how good is this artwork and why? Be specific. Do you like this artwork? Why?

## ACTIVITIES

### Music

**Objective:** Students will be introduced to Opera. (Some schools have opera singers come and perform. This would be a good activity to do before such a performance.)

Show the class the slide of *Design for Drop-Curtain, Park City Opera House*. Tell the students a little about Joseph Kerby and about the history of Opera in Utah. Then play the students some excerpts from operas. You may also be able to get a video of an opera to

show. Tell the students the plot of one or more operas; they may find the plots are similar to soap operas. If so, ask them what the differences are between TV Soaps and Opera. If you can't get access to a video of opera, you could use an operetta such as *Pirates of Penzance*, just explain the difference between operettas and opera.

### **Art/Drama**

**Objective:** Students will learn about trompe l'oeil art, about set design, and will use that knowledge to design a set for a production.

Show the class the slide of *Design for Drop Curtain* and discuss, using the QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING. Tell the students a little about Joseph Kerby. Include the information that he was a self-taught artist and loved designing scenery for the Opera House. Give the students scratch paper and have them briefly sketch a design for scenery for a play, opera, or other production.

Then have them make a finished drawing or painting on a large sheet of paper. Students should use what they know about perspective to create their drawings. If students have not learned one-point perspective, teach them perspective first. This activity should be a fun exercise to practice their skills on. (See the lesson on perspective in this packet.)

If you want to include more about drama in this activity, include a discussion of the considerations for designing scenery. Ask students to include a list of the considerations on a separate sheet of paper.

**Variation:** Start the activity as above but have the students sketch ideas for a backdrop for a production your class or another is going to do. (Secondary schools usually put on at least one play every year, and elementary schools typically have productions for parents by each grade.) If someone else is producing, you will need to work with them on the design.

Work together to create one backdrop. Try to incorporate something from each student's drawing. Then make the backdrop. If your stage has bars that backdrops can be hung from, you will need enough material to make a reasonable sized backdrop. You may be able to find a parent who will help with the project. If so, get that person to try to find material that will be donated and someone to sew the material together into a large piece. The material will need to have an undercoat of a neutral color. Then transfer the drawing to the backdrop. (If you or a helper can't do this freehand, blow up sections using an opaque projector or a \*\*\*? Have students paint the backdrop in small groups<you'll need someone to supervise them or to keep the other students busy with another activity while you supervise the painting.

When the material has been painted, use a staple gun to attach it to narrow pieces of wood at the top and the bottom. You can often get long, thin pieces of wood free at cabinetry shops. Attach the backdrop to the bar with loops of twine or other material.

Another way to complete this activity is to use large sheets of cardboard. These can be taped together on the back to create one solid piece or can be separate, stand alone pieces of scenery. After they have been painted, staple wooden supports to the back and make some kind of brace so they will stand upright. See sketch below of ways to support the cardboard. How fancy you need to get will depend on whether this scenery will be used more than once and on who is helping you.

### Art

**Objective:** Students will create their own trompe l'oeil picture using Joseph Kerby's painting, *Design for Drop-Curtain, Park City Opera House* as an example.

Teacher Preparation: Read the History of Trompe L'oeil and look up some of the internet sites that have images. Show the class the slides from this packet. If necessary, show or discuss how to draw perspective or create the illusion of depth.

Activity: Show the slide of Joseph Kerby's painting and discuss, using the following questions: What do you see? What is unusual about the painting? What statement or idea do you think the artist was trying to express or show?

Explain this style of art and discuss the techniques used by the artist to create the fool the-eye illusion. Ask the students if they think the artist had fun painting this picture.

Discuss some other kinds of scenes they could put "on the stage." Have students start their pictures by drawing the architectural part first. (this should be fully developed before they start the illusion of depth) When they have completed this part of the drawing, have them draw the illusion.

Conclusion: Let students discuss their feelings about this experience. Show the Kerby slide again and give students time to discuss their feelings about how their appreciation or understanding of this work of art has changed. If possible, exhibit the students' work.

**ARTIST: Martin Lenzi** (1815-1898)  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**TITLE: *Aquarium Shells* 1895**

**MEDIA:** oil on board

[click image to enlarge] **SIZE:** 12-1/4" x 17-1/2"

### **QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)**

What do you see in this painting?

How real do the shells look? Do you think the primary purpose of this painting was to be decorative, to express an emotion or idea, to copy nature, to give us information, or to convince us to think or act a certain way? (Use specific information from the artwork to justify your answer)

How much of a trompe l'oeil artwork is this? (100%, 75%, 25%) Do you like this artwork? Why?

#### **Art**

**Objective:** students will learn to look at art thoughtfully and become more aware of the tools and techniques artists use to create a work of art that "fools our eye." They will produce work of their own incorporating some or all of these tools and techniques.

Lesson: show the slide of Martin Lenzi's *Aquarium Shells*. Tell the class the name of the painting and make sure everyone knows what an aquarium is.

Ask students what they see. Continue questioning to get specific, detailed responses. Ask why this painting fools our eye. Do the shells in the painting look real? Are they real shells? Why do you think the shells look real? Discuss things such as the colors, details, shapes, patterns, painting technique etc.

#### **Art**

**Objective:** students will use the artistic elements of shape, color, and texture to produce a realistic work of art.

Artists fool our eyes by making things look real. Choose a **simple** object that the students can draw and paint. Discuss its color, shape, texture, and anything else about it that will be important for them to notice in order to do a realistic drawing. Explain that they don't need to worry that their painting will not look like that of a professional artist. The objective is to learn to use the tools and techniques of professional artists.

Step 1: Getting the shape right. Discuss the shape of the object you have chosen and ways it can be drawn. For example, the students may decide they need to use a ruler, or they may need to discover proportions or relationships of the parts (it is important the object be something your class can easily draw).

Step 2: Looking at the color. Discuss the color and any variations in the color caused by light or surface variations. Discuss how they will need to mix the paint to get the right colors. (Object should be a basic color that will not require mixing paint other than to get tints and shades<adding white to lighten or black to darken.)

Step 3: Noticing the texture. Is it smooth, rough etc.? Is the surface dull or shiny? What kind of texture does it have? When all of these things have been discussed and the students have made decisions about what they need to do to make a realistic painting of this object, let them get to work.

Conclusion: Give students a chance to discuss what they liked or didn't like about this activity. Let them talk about the work they were able to produce. Ask them if they have a greater appreciation and/or understanding of art that is so realistic it can fool our eyes.

### **Art**

**Objective:** Students will discuss and produce a work of art that uses artistic techniques such as optical illusions, hidden objects, and/or perspective.

Teacher preparation: Have on hand some example of hidden object drawings, optical illusion art, and a landscape or picture which has perspective.

After showing and discussing *Aquarium Shells*, discuss some ways, besides making things look real, that artists "fool our eyes." Students could mention things like hidden object pictures, optical illusion drawings, two-dimensional art that looks three dimensional, such as landscapes, etc.

Show the examples you have of these kinds of art. Have the students decide which of the kinds of drawings discussed they would like to try. Be prepared to give some instruction or make some comments about how to do this kind of drawing, or let the students copy the example you have shown. Discuss the techniques they need to notice in order to be successful such as: How do artists hide objects in a picture? How is an optical illusion created? What happens to the objects in a painting or drawing to make it look as if it has depth?

Conclusion: Give students a chance to talk about the experience. What difficulties did they encounter? Has their appreciation of this kind of art been changed? Did they enjoy trying this kind of "fool the eye" art? What did they learn?

### **Science**

**Objective:** Students will be given the names of some of the shells in Martin Lenzi's, "Aquarium Shells" without being shown the painting and will have fun using their imaginations to create shells to go with those names. Then they will be shown the painting and discuss the relationship between the look of the shells and their names and the ones they have created.

Procedure: Give just the names of the following shells:

Tiger Cowry<spotted brown shell far left, found under coral blocks in the Pacific

Java Turrid<spiral gold shell bottom left, found in mud off shore in the tropics

Magpie Shell<large round shell on left, the bottom view of a "top shell", found near coral reefs in the Pacific. Used commercially for buttons and decoration

Red Abalone<Large shell in the middle, found only in California

Branched Murex<Large white shell on right, found in coral reefs in the Pacific and in the Florida Keys

North's Long Whelk<long, pointed, spiral shell at bottom right, found in shallow water in the Pacific, from Mexico to Ecuador

Give students time to create, from their imaginations, shells to go with these names.

Show the painting and ask the class if they can identify the real shells.

Discuss the relationship between the names of the shells and their shapes. Give information about the shells. Let the students explain why they created the shapes they did from the names they were given.

Conclusion: Ask: Where do you think these shells got their names? Look at the shapes of the shells, and decide what name you would give it.

**ARTIST:** Charles Peterson (1866-?)  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
**TITLE:** A Bit From the Studio of William C.  
**MEDIA:** Morris 1888  
oil on canvas  
**SIZE:** 32-1/4" x 24-1/4"

[click image to enlarge]

### **QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)**

What is this a painting of? What kind of art is it? What other kinds of art do you know that "fool the eye"? What techniques has the artist used to make the painted objects look real?

Trompe l'oeil art includes many kinds of art, but this painting is typical of the paintings that were first called Trompe L'oeil. The man who painted this was mostly a sign painter

and designer. Why do you think he painted this painting? This painting was also called *Just an Old Door*. Does that title make you feel differently about the painting?

If you judge this painting by the mimetic theory of aesthetics, is it a good painting? Why or why not? How is mimetic painting better or worse than other kinds? What kind of art do you like best? Why?

## ACTIVITIES

### Art History

**Objective:** Students will learn about the history of trompe l'oeil art, some typical kinds of trompes, and will demonstrate their understanding by creating an arrangement that could be rendered as a trompe l'oeil artwork.

Materials:

slides from this packet

examples from books of several other kinds of traditional trompe l'oeil artworks

items to make arrangements for trompe l'oeil works

Show students the slides from this packet, using information from the History of Trompe L'oeil. Have books that contain examples of several other kinds of trompe l'oeil works for the students to look at. Have students collect items for the assignment. You may be able to contribute items as well. Divide the class into groups and have each group create a different kind of arrangement that could make a good trompe l'oeil painting.

Some possibilities are

- A still life of items such as musical instruments, music, horseshoes, metal odds and ends, or deer antlers, labels, wood, or keys, a watch, and two-dimensional artifacts like old tickets, cards, etc.
- Clear out a cupboard or some shelves and let students arrange objects on the shelves or in the cupboard.
- Students can bring items to put on a bulletin board like Edith Roberson's or with ribbons thumb tacked across like those done in the 1700s.
- Bring or make a simple shadow box that students can fill with interesting objects.
- Students can combine an easel, a painting, drawings or photographs with brushes, and other art supplies to make a painter's easel scene.
- Students can create a version of "The Unswept Floor," a famous mosaic which has normal (for 2,000 years ago) items that would have just been dropped on the floor. Students could create an archaic arrangement or a modern-day one such as what the school cafeteria floor might look like after lunch is over or what a movie theater floor would look like at the end of the night.

While students are working, remind them to use their knowledge of the elements and principles of art. When the groups are finished, give the students a chance to look at the other groups' arrangements. Then discuss trompe l'oeil artwork <what the students learned

from creating the arrangements and whether the experience changed their appreciation for trompe l'oeil work. You also could now discuss the mimetic theory of aesthetics since students should understand it better. (See activity on Aesthetics)

If possible, invite another class in to tour your exhibit of trompe l'oeil arrangements. Have one student from each group briefly explain their arrangement. You may want to take photographs of the trompe l'oeil arrangements.

**ARTIST:** Edith T. Roberson (1929- )  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**TITLE:** *Channel Three* 1981

**MEDIA:** oil on board

[click image to enlarge] **SIZE:** 24" x 36"

### **QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)**

What do you see? What did you see first? Why did it draw you in? What kind of objects do you see? What do they remind you of? What kinds of colors are used? Do the colors make you feel a certain way (warm, cold, or hot)? What kind of textures do you see? Do the textures make you feel a certain way? What kind of space is used? (The space is not deep space, but the items do have some dimension in the artwork.) What makes you think this is a painting and not a cork board? How did the artist create this painting? Is this painting a collage? Are the objects somehow related? How are they different?

### **ACTIVITIES**

#### **Art**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of collage, painting, and found objects by incorporating found objects in a painting or collage.

A few days before the activity, explain what found objects are and assign the students to bring found objects to class. (found objects are usually refuse or debris, things that have been used and discarded: but may also include interestingly shaped natural objects )

You may want to show the slide of Roberson's painting to give the students a preview of the activity.

The day of the activity, have the students show the objects they have chosen and compare and contrast the various selections. You may want to include a brief discussion of why the chosen specific items are "found objects," while others are not. Then show the class the slide of *Channel Three* and briefly discuss how Roberson has used found objects. Next, have the students make their own collages or paintings incorporating some or all of the found objects they brought. Afterwards, have the students discuss why they chose certain found objects. Did they have a theme in mind or did they just choose something? Do the students understand what found objects are?

If your class has had lessons on the elements or principles of art, you can remind the students to incorporate what they have learned in their collage/painting. This will work even if you have only talked about a few of the elements or principles.

### **Science**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of plant life cycles and nutrient needs by recording the results of experiments with beans grown under varying conditions.

Use the slide of *Channel Three* in the following anticipatory set. Show the class the slide and ask the students why the artist chose those particular

items to place on her imaginary bulletin board. Let the students respond. After someone has mentioned something about the packet of tomato seeds, steer the discussion towards plants by asking simple questions such as the following: Do any of you grow tomatoes at home? Are tomatoes hard to grow? What do tomato seeds need to become healthy, producing plants?

Then begin the science activity by explaining that they are going to experiment with plants. Either previously assign the students to bring styrofoam cups or supply each student with a cup and appropriate seeds. (Bean seeds are easy to grow and observe but use whatever kind(s) will best suit your class and the time you have available, as well as the desired complexity of experiment.) Explain how the seeds should be planted and supervise the planting.

Place some of the pots in different windows such as north, south, east or west-facing windows, to compare how the plants will grow in different lights. If you do not have windows in your classroom that face different directions, you and another teacher doing this activity can share window space.(or any teacher who will cooperate) As another variable, add plant food to some of the plants in each window and not to others.(teacher administer), or use different soil types.

As the plants grow, have the students keep a weekly log of what is happening. Discuss with the students the importance of nutrients for the plants. What nutrients are found in the soil? In water? In light? Adjust the complexity of the lesson to suit the age of the students and the time you have set aside for this project.

After the plants have grown, discuss what the students observed about the plants' growth. Did some plants grow better than others? Did the type of light make a difference? Did adding plant food make a difference? If the class is interested, you may want to repot the plants and see how long you can keep them growing, or use the plants for further experiments.

### **English**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of descriptive words by writing a poem that describes a painting.

Show the class the slide of *Channel Three* and have the students make a list of words that describe something in or about the painting. Use a thesaurus to demonstrate that many words have similar meanings. Then have the students choose something in the art work to describe through poetry. Have some of the students share their poems with the class.

Compare and discuss the experiences of writing and listening to the poems. Some possible discussion questions are as follows: What made the activity easy or hard? What made some poems more interesting than others? What kinds of ways were used to describe the chosen objects? How did student's tones and approaches differ?

### **Art**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of Superrealism by accurately rendering a found object.

A few days before the activity, explain found objects to the class and assign the students to find an object that interests them. You may also want to bring a few objects yourself, in case some of the children's objects are not suitable.

On the day of the activity, show the students the slide of *Channel Three* and read or tell them some of the information from the biography, being sure to include the ideas that Roberson calls herself a superrealist and that she likes to take objects and draw them larger than life size, examining every detail. You may need to explain what Superrealism is. (Superrealism is a style in which subjects are depicted exactly as they appear, with all the details. It's also called photorealism--like a photograph)

Then assign the students to draw their chosen object. The drawings should be larger than life size and should be as accurate as possible. Encourage the students to take simple measurements with their pencils and to establish the basic outline and main proportions of the object before drawing any detail. Also encourage them to think about the object's qualities as they draw. Older students may want to use colored pencils to finish their drawings.

Set up a display of the finished drawings and the found objects. Have each of the students decide what is most successful about his or her drawing. (accuracy, detail, size, proportion, quality) Look at Roberson's painting again. Ask the students how they **now** feel about her art work.

**ARTIST:** Roger D. "Sam" Wilson (1943- )

Salt Lake City, Utah

**TITLE:** *Crow Crowded, or I Myself* 1985

**MEDIA:** acrylic on canvas

**SIZE:** 36" x 42"

[click image to enlarge]

### QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

What objects do you see? How many "crow" objects do you see? How many textures do you see? What kind of space is used? Do you see a shelf or "stage" in this painting? What do you think might be "on stage"? Is this painting really a collage? What, if anything, is glued, taped, or pinned on this painting? How long do you think this painting took? Which object do you think the artist painted first? Why? Is anything in this painting an illusion or a "fool-the-eye" technique? What? Does anything in this painting make a joke? What?

### ACTIVITIES

#### Art

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate an understanding of how objects can portray people by creating a self-portrait still life that does not contain an image of themselves.

Show the class the slide of Sam Wilson's *Crow Crowded, or I Myself* and discuss how the painting is a self-portrait still life and how the objects depicted represent or illuminate Wilson's personality, instead of mostly showing us how he looks. Assign the students to bring some objects from home that they feel represent or explain their own personalities.

Have the students plan their self-portraits and do a rough draft that must be teacher approved for good design. After approval of their rough drafts, the students will each do a final drawing on good quality, 11"x 17" drawing paper. The drawings should use all the space, just like Sam Wilson's painting does. When the final draft is sketched, the students

will complete the work using Prima Pencil and paying attention to mixing and blending the colors, shadows, and highlights, as taught in previous lessons. Before turning in the completed work, each student should critique his or her work to make sure it fulfills the assignment

**Variation:** For a class of young students, or one that has not had extensive art training, have the students finish their drawings using crayons, colored pencils, or whatever media you have available and are comfortable having the children use. Expect and ask for the students' best work, taking into consideration their age and training.

### **Art**

**Objective:** The students will create shadow-box portraits using objects to represent themselves or other, specific individuals.

Show the class the slide of *Crow Crowded, or I Myself* and discuss how Sam Wilson has used objects to represent himself. If possible, show the students some samples of shadow boxes. Tell the students they will be making shadow-box portraits that contain actual objects. Unless you have a source for lots of small boxes, get the students to collect small boxes as well as items that will fit in them. Decide, or let the class decide, whether their shadow-box portraits will be self-portraits or portraits of someone else. Allow the students several days to find small, meaningful objects that explain or show their subject's personality or what that person's life has been like.

Have the students glue or staple the boxes together in an interesting design. The arrangements may also need to be fastened to poster board, heavy cardboard, or some other backing material. The students will probably be most successful if they make preliminary decisions about objects and box arrangements by placing the objects in boxes and moving them around before they fasten the boxes together.

After the boxes are fastened together, the students can make final decisions about placement and glue or wire the objects in place. Have the class arrange the finished boxes in a display and compare and contrast the results.

**Variation:** A simplified version of the preceding activity can be done by gluing small objects onto heavy cardboard and not worrying about the boxes.

**Variation:** Instead of having the students each do a portrait, have the class do a group project that is a portrait of someone the class is studying. After learning about the individual, assign each child to bring a small item to class that he or she thinks says something about that person or about the person's life. You may also want to allow bits of text to be used.

### **English/Creative Writing**

**Objective:** The students will write a descriptive essay of themselves, describing the things that might be on a personal bulletin board.

Show the class the slide of *Crow Crowded, or I Myself* and discuss how Wilson has used items supposedly on a bulletin board to create a self-portrait still life. If the students do not know, tell them this style of painting is called trompe l'oeil painting, which means "fool the eye." Assign the students to do a prewriting exercise in which they describe something so well, that were anyone to walk into a room they could walk right to it. Have the students critique the prewriting exercises. Share some with the class.

Next, have the students decide what might be on their own personal bulletin boards. After deciding what to include, the students will write, describing themselves by describing the items they think would be on their bulletin boards. Critique the assignments and share with the class.

**Variation:** After describing their bulletin boards, have the students say why each item is on the board. Compare both the kinds of items as well as the reasons they are included.