

Alice Momm:

Middle School Lesson

Lesson Title: Surrealist Wunderkammer

Activity: Students will create individual, or group Wunderkammers, either as shadow boxes, mixed media collages, or digital collages

Grade level: 6-9

Time: 4x45 min. periods

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, each student, or group of students will create a Wunderkammer filled with images and/or objects that they have drawn, found or collected. The images will be curated and organized according to a principal decided by the student(s). Final projects may be in the form of shadow boxes, mixed media collages or digital collages.

Materials: For each student, or group of students:

Painting materials (watercolor or Tempera)

Drawing materials (cray-pas, graphite bars, pencils etc.)

Paper

Glue Sticks or white glue (Elmer's, Tacky glue, ModPodge etc.)

Wooden Cigar box, or similar sized cardboard box (if making shadow boxes)

Found objects

(Digital Variant):

For each student, or group of students:

Computer with Internet access

Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, or other software capable of manipulating images.

Vocabulary: Wunderkammer, [natural](#)

[history](#), [geology](#), [ethnography](#), [archaeology](#), [relics](#), [antiquities](#), manifesto, marvel

Inspiration: Nature is full of wonders. As early as the 1500's the wealthy and powerful demonstrated their wealth by creating Wunderkammers—rooms (and later cabinets) filled with

amazing, unusual and rare objects, or drawings and paintings of amazing, unusual and rare objects. Inside a Wunderkammer, you might find examples from the fields of [natural history](#) (sometimes faked), [geology](#), [ethnography](#), [archaeology](#), religious or historical [relics](#), works of art and [antiquities](#).

In her exhibition A Conversation With Trees, Alice has created sculptures of amazing, wondrous creatures that might have been found in a Wunderkammer; oddities discovered in nature, or made out of natural elements.

In the mid 1900's a group of artists called the Surrealists were also fascinated with the unusual. In the 1929 Manifesto of Surrealism, Andre Breton wrote, "the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful." Inspired by his words, Surrealist artists like Max Ernst, Hannah Hoch, Remedios Varo and others made drawings, collages and paintings of strange, marvelous images: images worthy of being marveled at.

For this project, students will use surrealist techniques such as frottage (taking rubbings) (see Max Ernst, The Fugitive), collage (see Hannah Hoch, Vanity, From an Ethnographic Museum) and/or drawing and painting (see Remedios Varo, Creation of Birds), or play the surrealist game of exquisite corpse, to create marvelous, amazing images of animals or other exotica that can be arranged into a Wunderkammer: either in a shadow box, or on a piece of paper,

See below: instructions for playing the surrealist game Exquisite Corpse

(Digital Variant)

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For this project, students will collect images of rare, unusual, or amazing objects online. Working with Photoshop, or other image processing software, students can manipulate or transform the images to make them all the more marvelous: worthy of being marveled at. Students can then arrange the collection of images into a digital collage, creating the illusion of a wall, room or cabinet filled with marvelous and curious objects.

Procedure/Activity:

Period 1

- Review Image Dominico Remps. *Cabinet of Curiosities*
 - Discussion questions:
 - What is a Wunderkammer?
 - What are some wonderful, marvelous or odd things in the Wunderkammer Remps painted?
- Review images of Alice Momm's show
 - Discussion Question:
 - How is Jensen's show like a Wunderkammer?
- Review Surrealist Images
 - Discussion question:
 - What is wonderful, marvelous or odd about these images?
- Students from small groups to play one or two rounds of Exquisite Corpse (see instructions below)

Period 2

- Introduction to frottage (see information attached below)
 - Students are given a sheet of paper and a selection of unwrapped crayons or graphite bars
 - Students are invited to take rubbings of various surfaces in the room
 - Collected textures can be cut out and collaged together, with additional drawing to create unexpected images.
- Planning for Wunderkammer
 - Individuals or small groups plan the content of their wunderkammer—either a large collage, or shadow box. Students can include exquisite corpse drawings, frottage drawings, collages, and/or found objects.

Period 3

- Students begin making drawings and assembling found objects on to larger collage or into shadow box.

Period 4

- Students complete work on Wunderkammer by making additional images and collaging them into place and/or finalizing composition of elements.

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 - Discussion question:
 - What is wonderful, marvelous or odd about these images?
- Students from small groups to play one or two rounds of Exquisite Corpse (see instructions below)

Period 2

- Introduction to digital collage techniques
 - Students assemble a variety of images from the Internet, people, plants, animals, consumer goods, etc.
 - Using Photoshop, Illustrator, or other familiar classroom image processing software, students create a composite image by cutting and pasting elements from different images together, paying attention to scaling elements so that they "fit."

Period 3

- Individuals or small groups plan the content of their digital collage/ wunderkammer
Students can include exquisite corpse drawings (if scanned) in addition to digital images.
- Students begin collecting images from the Internet, either oddities they discover, or images to be collaged.

Period 4

- Students complete work on Wunderkammer by making additional images and collaging them into place and/or finalizing composition of elements.

Standards:

New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts

1.1.8.D.2: The study of masterworks of art from diverse cultures and different [historical eras](#) assists in understanding specific cultures.

1.3.8.D.1: The creation of art is driven by the principles of balance, harmony, unity, emphasis, proportion, and rhythm/movement.

1.3.8.D.2: Themes in art are often communicated through symbolism, allegory, or irony. There are a wide variety of art mediums, each having appropriate tools and processes for the production of artwork. Fluency in these mediums, and the use of the appropriate tools associated with working in these mediums, are components of art- making.

1.3.8.D.4: Universal themes exist in art across [historical eras](#) and cultures. Art may embrace multiple solutions to a problem.

1.3.8.D.: The visual possibilities and inherent qualities of traditional and contemporary art materials (including digital media) may inform choices about visual communication and art-making techniques.

1.4.8.A.6 : Awareness of basic elements of style and design in dance, music, theatre, and visual art inform the creation of criteria for judging originality.



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To play Exquisite Corpse:

1. Break students into groups of 3, 4 or 5 students.
2. Give each group a piece of paper
3. Fold the paper horizontally so that there are as many sections as there are members of the group
4. The first student draws part of an animal, person, or other figures on the top section, allowing the drawing to just go over the fold.
5. Fold the drawing under and pass the paper to the next person
6. The next person continues the drawing, without seeing what was originally drawn.
7. The drawing should just cross over the fold.
8. Fold the new section back and pass the paper to the next artist.
9. Continue drawing and folding under until all sections are complete
10. Unfold the paper to reveal the drawing

Frottage:

Frottage is a surrealist and 'automatic' method of creative production that involves creating a rubbing of a textured surface using a pencil or other drawing material

The technique was developed by Max Ernst in drawings made from 1925. Frottage is the French word for rubbing. Ernst was inspired by an ancient wooden floor where the grain of the planks had been accentuated by many years of scrubbing. The patterns of the graining suggested strange images to him. From 1925 he captured these by laying sheets of paper on the floor and then rubbing over them with a soft pencil. The results suggest mysterious forests peopled with bird-like creatures and Ernst published a collection of these drawings in 1926 titled *Histoire Naturelle* (natural history). (Tate Museum, <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/f/frottage>)

Frottage images can be created by rubbing paper with pencil, graphite bar, wax crayon or cray-pas while the paper is over a textured surface. Textures can be supplied by the teacher (sand paper, window screen, metallic foil, plywood etc.) or discovered by students around the classroom/art studio.

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Frottage:

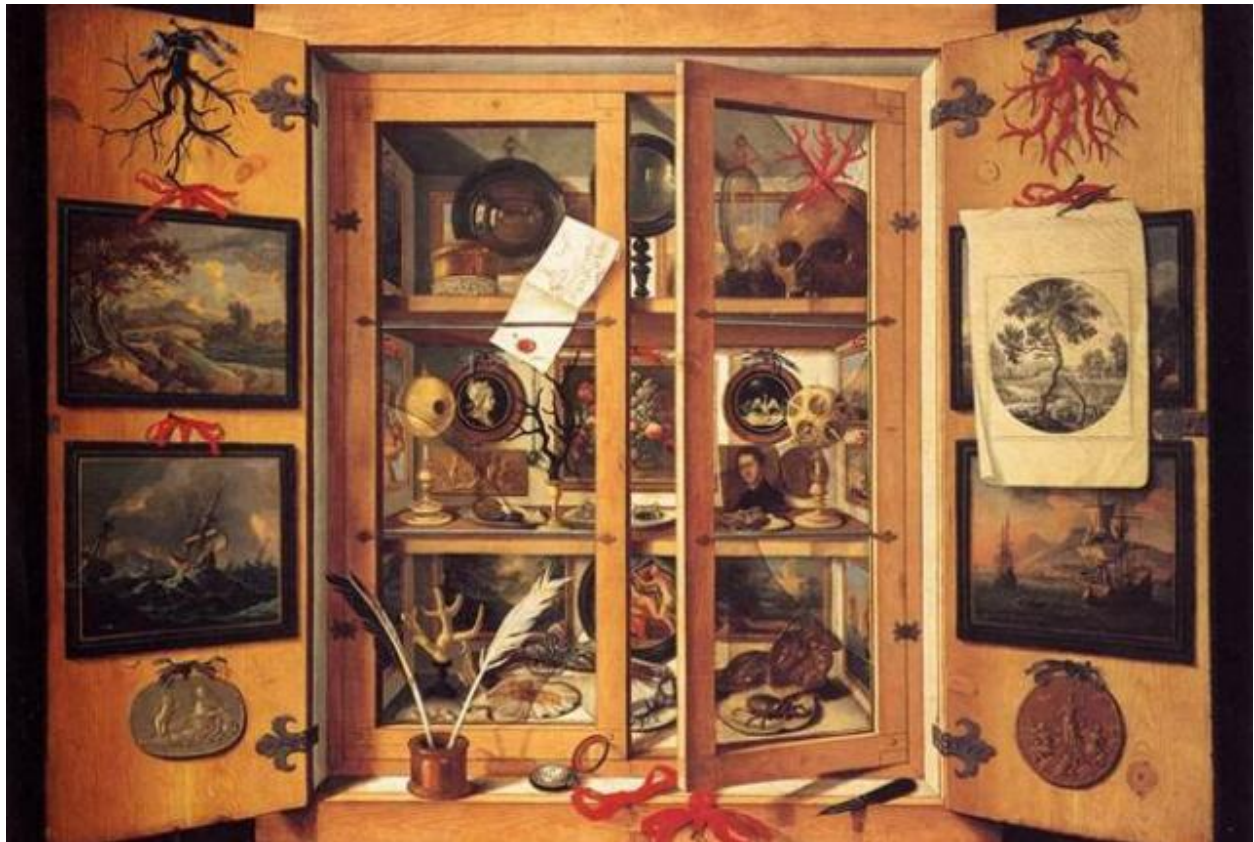
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Images: (To be stored as separate files)

Dominico Remps. *Cabinet of Curiosities*, circa 1690, Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence



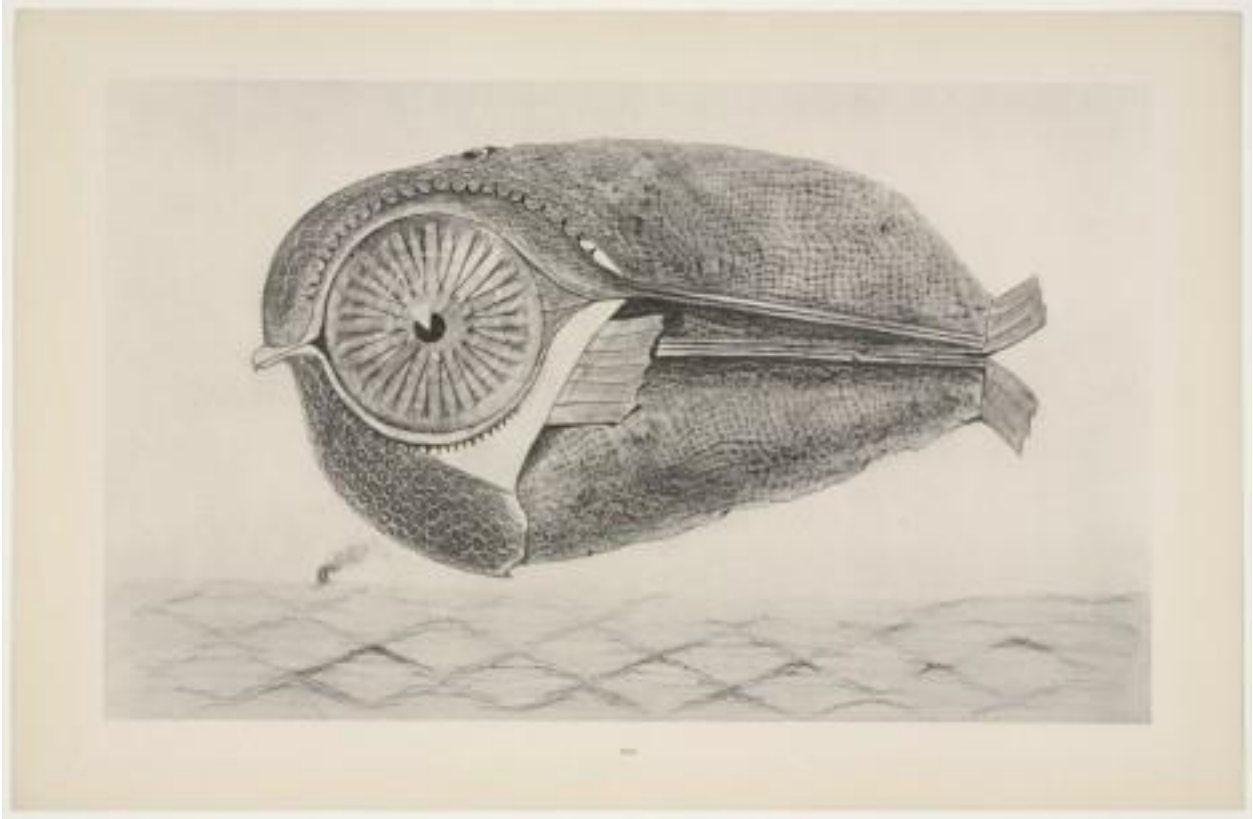
Dominico Remps. *Cabinet of Curiosities*, circa 1690

Oil on Canvas

Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cabinet_of_Curiosities_1690s_Domenico_Remps.jpg

Max Ernst



The Fugitive, 1926

One from a portfolio of thirty-four collotypes, after frottage, composition: 10 1/4 x 16 3/4";
sheet: 12 13/16 x 19 11/16"

Museum of Modern Art

https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/max-ernst-levade

Exquisite Corpse Drawing:
Esteban Frances and Remedios Varo circa 1940



Image downloaded from
<http://thornyissues2.blogspot.com/>

Hannah Hoch:



Vanity. From an Ethnographic Museum

Photomontage, 1926

Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg

<http://archives-dada.tumblr.com/post/40922617188/hannah-h%C3%B6ch-monument-ii-vanity-from-an>

Remedios Varo, The Creation of Birds



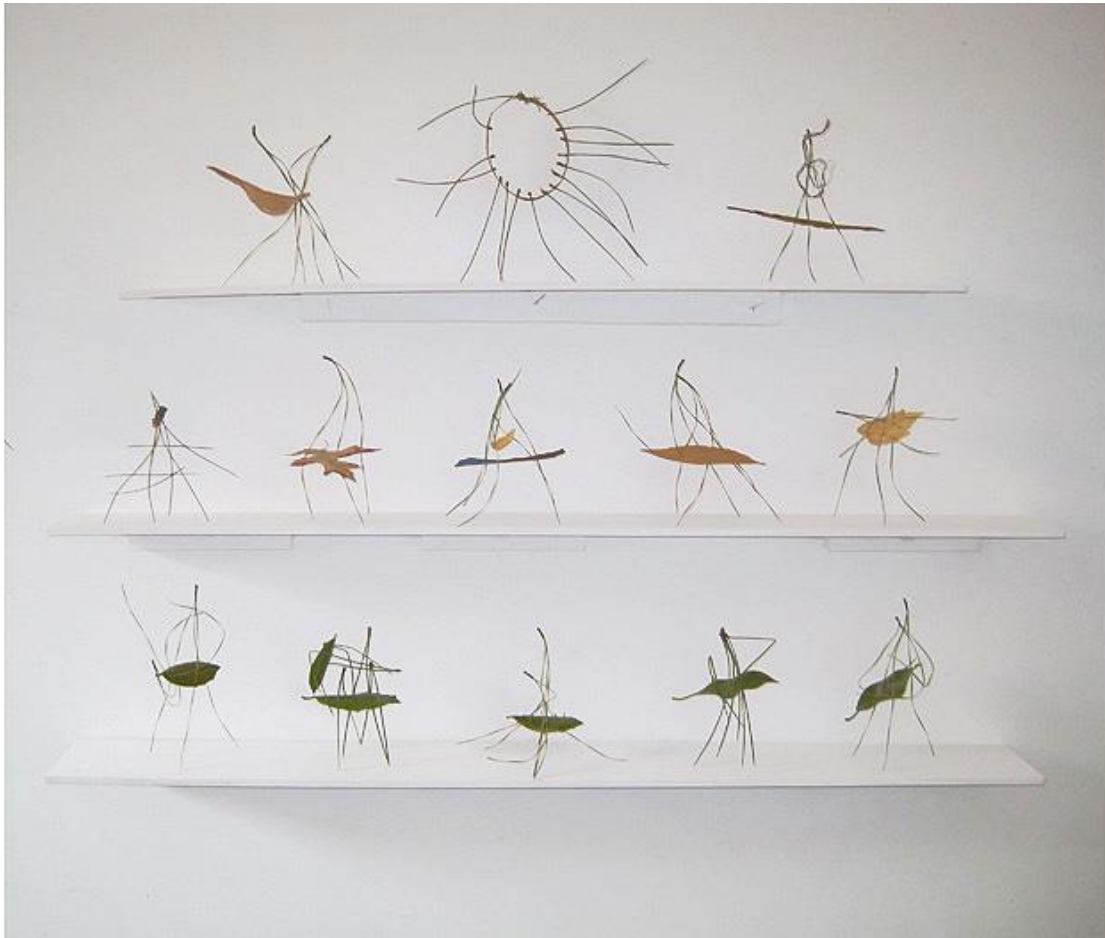
Remedios Varo

Creation of the Birds

Oil on Masonite

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/remedios-varo/creation-of-the-birds>

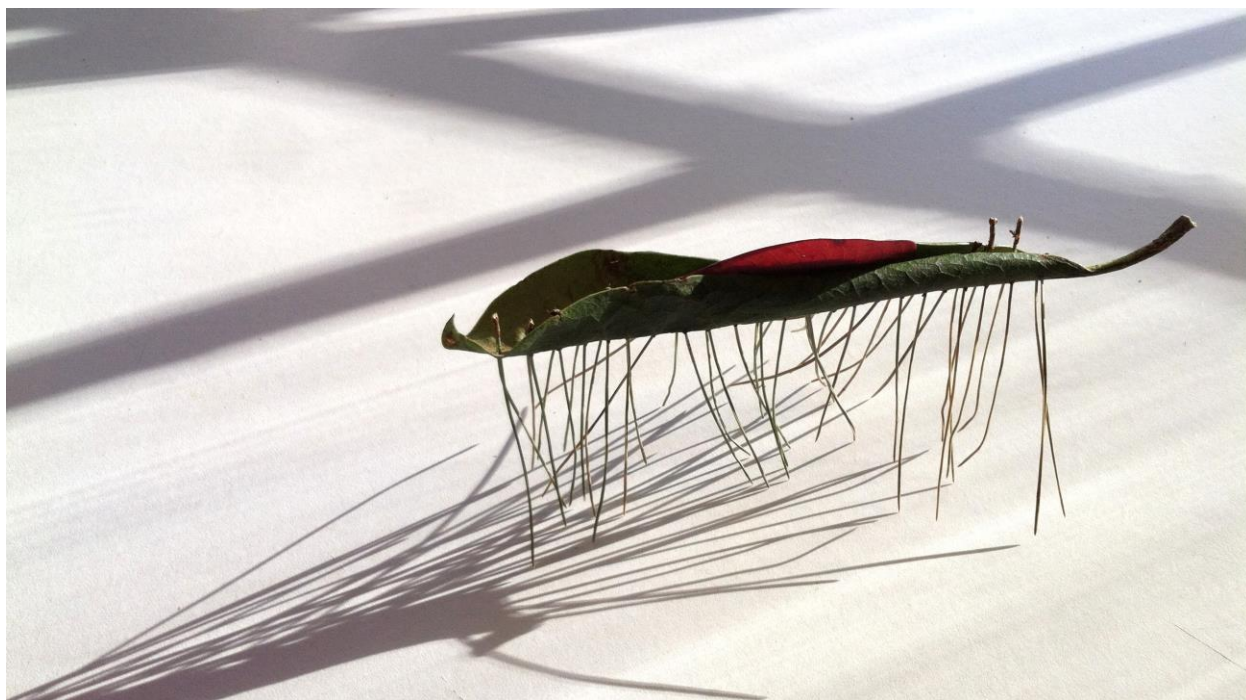
Alice Momm



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Pine Needle Sculptures 3

Courtesy of Visual Arts Center of NJ



Walking Leaf Boat

Courtesy of Visual Arts Center of NJ