



Robin Collyer (Canadian, b.1949)

Tower | 1993

wood, vacuum-formed plastic
180.0 x 100.0 x 100.0cm
Gift of the artist

What can we learn from looking at Robin Collyer's *Tower*?

Let's look

Take your time. Look carefully. Where do your eyes go first? Then where? Take in as many details as you can.

Let's describe

Although Collyer's sculpture is titled *Tower*, what else does it look like to you and why?

Encourage students to ask questions. What visual elements in the artwork prompt the questions asked?

Let's imagine

If you could walk inside the *Tower* what would you find? Would it be dark, light, warm or cold? *Tower* looks a bit like a rocket ship. If you could fly *Tower* where would you go and where would you land?

Art-making inspired by Robin Collyer's *Tower*.

Cardboard Castles

Curriculum Connections: Make choices and decisions about tools and materials in the creation of art objects.

Materials Needed

Image of Robin Collyer's sculpture *Tower*
 Tempera Paint
 Water Containers
 Paper Towel
 Pencils
 Erasers
 Cardboard Pieces

Paper Towel Rolls
 Toilet Paper Rolls
 Cardboard Boxes
 Tape
 Glue
 Decorating materials
 (feathers, leaves, buttons, etc)



Let's Get Started

Discuss!

Sculptures can be made from many different materials. Cardboard is an excellent material that is available as a recycled material as it can be found in many homes. Giving students the opportunity to work 3-dimensionally allows them to experience a different type of the art making process and having students construct buildings allows them to use their imagination as well as personal memory to construct art.

Prepare!

The teacher needs to have a variety of cardboard shapes and pieces available for the class to use. If students are asked to collect pieces from their homes for a week or two prior to the project then the task of collecting pieces will not be solely left to the teacher. Aside from the cardboard materials the teacher should have a few decorating materials available for the students to use.

Create!

Note: The example image of Robin Collyer's sculpture *Tower* will be on display for the class to show the concept of three-dimensional sculpture.

1. The class will discuss the sculpture and the teacher can ask what the image reminds them of. If prompting is necessary the teacher can ask questions such as: What do they think the image looks like? A tower as the name would suggest? A rocket? A castle? Do they think it looks realistic or like something from a fairytale? Can they imagine who or what would live in the structure?

2. Following the short discussion, students will be told that they are going to create their own sculpture. For the sake of the assignment, ask students to stick to creating a building.
3. After the initial discussion period, students will also given pieces of cardboard. If they have brought pieces from home they can use their own pieces. Students will also have access to the cardboard pieces that the teacher has supplied.
4. A few instructions will given to the students once they all have their selected pieces at their desks. The students will be instructed that they will start with one piece of cardboard (a box or large tube shape works best) as their main structure and details can be added on to this supporting structure. Pieces can be attached with tape initially, and then secured with glue for extra strength.
5. Once students have selected their main structure encourage them to use their imagination in creating the rest of their building. The building does not have to be “realistic” but can be anything they want.
6. Students will be told to make sure that the pieces they attach are secured with tape so as to prevent problems later on. Once all pieces are added and secured down with tape, students will take glue and add it to the joins of the pieces for added strength.
7. After students have finished building their structures they are now ready to paint and decorate their buildings.
8. Students will be given their paint tray with their spectrum of colours (which varies depending on resources) when they are ready. Be sure to not use too much black as it over powers most colours very easily. Once students have their paint are ready to begin painting.
9. The finished buildings need to be put aside to dry for the night, as the glue and paint will need a few hours.
10. The next day, students will take time to have an “open house” where the classroom is set up so that all students have their sculptures at their desks. The students will walk around their classroom and look at each others work as if they were in a gallery setting.

Tips and Tricks

Shoe boxes work great for the initial structure. An additional material that can be used for the main structure is a coffee can. They are solid enough to have other pieces attached on, and strong enough to support a lot of weight.

Artist Biography

Robin Collyer (1949-) was born in London, England. His family immigrated to Canada in 1957. He studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design (Toronto) in the 1960s, and by 1971 he had his first solo exhibition at the legendary Carmen Lamanna Gallery (Toronto).

Since 1971, Collyer has exhibited sculpture and photography internationally. He is best known for his three-dimensional sculptures that use industrial materials, recycled objects, and images and text from advertising and media. His minimalist sculpture is created using geometric design, abstraction, and unadorned materials.

In his photographic works, Collyer often captures natural, urban, and suburban scenes, and uses irony and juxtaposition to show the impact of human beings on the natural landscape. Many of his photographs focus on language in media and advertising, playing with the unexpected appearance of words and phrases within otherwise ordinary environments. His sculptures reveal an ongoing interest in architectural form.

Robin Collyer has exhibited in galleries across North America and Europe. He represented Canada at *Dokumenta 8* in Kassel, Germany, in 1987, and at the Venice Biennale in 1993. Collyer's work is featured in numerous public and commercial collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Collection of France, and Susan Hobbs Gallery in Toronto. Collyer currently lives in Toronto and teaches in the Sculpture and Installation Department at the Ontario College of Art and Design.

Q & A with Robin Collyer (April 2, 2007)

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| <p>1. When and where were you born?
March 07, 1949, London, England.</p> | <p>6. Did you have any jobs you had to do at home for your parents?
No.</p> | <p>13. Did you go to art school?
18 months at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto.</p> |
| <p>2. Do you have brothers and sisters?
2 younger brothers.</p> | <p>7. What were your favourite classes at school?
I had no favourites.</p> | <p>14. Who is your favourite artist?
Andy Warhol.</p> |
| <p>3. Did you like them when you were growing up?
They were my brothers and I was preoccupied with my own activities.</p> | <p>8. Favourite sports?
I didn't play sports.</p> | <p>15. What is the best thing about being an artist?
The freedom to follow your interests.</p> |
| <p>4. Was anyone in your family an artist?
No.</p> | <p>9. Did you draw or paint as a child?
I did drawings of jet planes and cars.</p> | <p>16. What is the worst thing about being an artist?
The lack of predictability when it comes to income.</p> |
| <p>5. What were your favourite things to do when you were a child?
I enjoyed making things and fixing things. I liked mechanical objects. I helped my father fix his car and I raced go-karts competitively during my teen years.</p> | <p>10. Did people think you would grow-up to be an artist while you were in school?
No.</p> | <p>17. If you could be anything else in the world, what would you be?
President of the United States</p> |
| | <p>11. When did you decide to be an artist?
Second year of art college.</p> | |
| | <p>12. Why did you decide to become an artist?
The lack of parameters.</p> | |

Art Terms

Conceptual Art: An artwork in which the physical object is not necessarily an end product. Instead, the idea of the work and examination of its theoretical value are the primary motivations, with the written word as an important vehicle of presentation.

Sculpture: The techniques and processes of creating three-dimensional forms and images by carving, casting, construction, or modelling.

Form: An element of art that is three-dimensional (height, width, and depth) and encloses volume.

Space: An element of art that refers to the area between, around, above, below, or within things. It can be described as two- or three-dimensional, as flat, shallow, or deep, or as positive or negative.

Abstraction: An art form or object that is primarily an arrangement of basic visual elements, i.e. colour, line and contour, mass, shape and texture. Real objects in nature are represented in a way that wholly or partially neglects their true appearance.

Art movement

Minimalism: Paintings and sculptures that thrive on simplicity in both content and form, using only a minimal number of colours, shapes, values, lines, and textures. Minimalism lacks both symbolism and personal expression.

Resources

Robin Collyer

The Canadian Encyclopedia: Robin Collyer

A detailed biography with sample works and suggested readings.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0009156>

Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art: The Work of Robin Collyer

digital collection of over 200 works by Robin Collyer, from the very early to the most recent.

http://www.ccca.ca/artists/artist_work.html?languagePref=en&link_id=187&artist=Robin+Collyer&startRec=1&cnt=243&ord=asc

Photography

Learning Centre Toolkit: Decoding Photographs

Library and Archives Canada offers this excellent resource, which teaches us how to describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate photographs.

Examples of photography and resources for both teachers and students are provided.

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/008-3080-e.html>

Cybermuse Lesson Plans: Drawing with Light

Created by the National Gallery of Canada, this exceptional resource explores the art of photography. Includes activities for all grade levels, sample artists and artworks, a historical chronology, a “See and Compare” section, and a glossary of related terms. A section on Robin Collyer is also provided.

http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/teachers/plans/intro_e.jsp?lessonid=183

Conceptual Art/ Minimalism

Cybermuse Lesson Plans: New Ideas New Materials

Created by the National Gallery of Canada, this resource teaches about Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and “Process” Art. Includes activities for all grade levels, sample artists and artworks, a historical chronology, a “See and Compare” section, and a glossary of related terms.

http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/teachers/plans/intro_e.jsp?lessonid=125

Artlex: Minimalism

A brief definition of Minimalism, several examples of Minimalist art from the early 1900s to the present, and related links.

<http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/m/minimalism.html>