

station gallery robert houle: collage

THE ONTARIO
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INFORMATION TO SPARK THINKING ABOUT ART



collage piece by
a Station Gallery student

fact:

Collage was first used by Japanese calligraphers who incorporated pieces of paper and fabric onto their surfaces as a background for their calligraphy brushstrokes.

feature work from our Permanent Collection

Houle was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba in 1947 and currently resides in Toronto. He holds a degree in Art History from the University of Manitoba and a degree in Art Education from McGill University. He also studied fine arts in Salzburg, Austria. Before this he was an elementary and secondary school teacher as well as curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. He is presently teaching Native Studies at the Ontario College of Art and Design. His works have been showcased throughout Canada and the United States at many different galleries and exhibitions. His work being featured is from a series entitled *Collage Auto-Portrait I-XII* executed from 1992-1995 and exhibited at Station Gallery in the 1990's. This series demonstrates historically significant subject matter as well as works to inform the viewer about the struggles of the First Nation's people as a group, individuals and as artists, like Houle.

"Native artists are committed to involvement in the polemics of modern art. Meaning derives from living in the twentieth century, where painting ranges from realism to abstraction and sculpture varies from shamanism to assemblage."

Robert Houle

Process: What is Collage?

A collage is a picture or design created by gluing typically flat elements such as newspaper, wallpaper, printed text and illustrations, photographs, cloth, string, etc. to a surface. Cubist artists such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque used collage by including various found objects, pictures and text in their works, influencing many later Modern and Contemporary artists to this day, as well as promoting the medium's acceptance as a real art form. The materials selected for collages were and are primarily chosen for their symbolism. Some types of collage are: Photomontages - where photographs are arranged artistically onto a surface, and Decoupages, where a picture(s) is placed onto an object for decoration, as well as your standard mixed media collage, where various elements are added to a work already done in another medium, like painting.

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feature work

This series combines Houle's Ojibwa-Saulteaux heritage and personal experiences into a visually abstracted work. This series provides an interesting visual commentary on the struggles endured by contemporary Native artists with regards to their juggling of contemporary issues and Native traditions in their art making. Houle encourages contemporary Native artists to show in mainstream institutions and break old traditions, while also preserving their own distinct culture, and as such abides by these ideas in his own works. Houle has incorporated historical and cultural items and symbols in his collage that relate to said struggles and visually suggest deeper meaning through their placement and arrangement together.



Collage Auto-Portrait,
1992-1995
mixed media
(collage, vinyl lettering,
Polaroid photos, gold leaf, heat transfer)
22 x 30 in
Purchase 1997

curriculum questions

Does this work look symmetrically, or asymmetrically balanced to you? Why?
How has the artist used shape and colour to show balance, or unbalance?
Has this artist used any other elements in his design?

curriculum link

Grade 6, Principle of Design Focus : Balance (from The Ontario Curriculum for The Arts 2009)

Balance: arrangement of the elements of design to create the impression of equality in weight or importance (e.g., a formal or symmetrical arrangement produced through distribution of shapes; an informal or asymmetrical arrangement produced through use of colour); colour concepts to be used in creating balance (e.g., light or neutral colours appear lighter in "weight" than dark or brilliant colours; warm colours seem to expand, cool colours seem to contract; transparent areas seem to "weigh" less than opaque areas)