

ArtReach Pre-Visit Packet: *James Castle: Idaho Artist (1900-1977)*

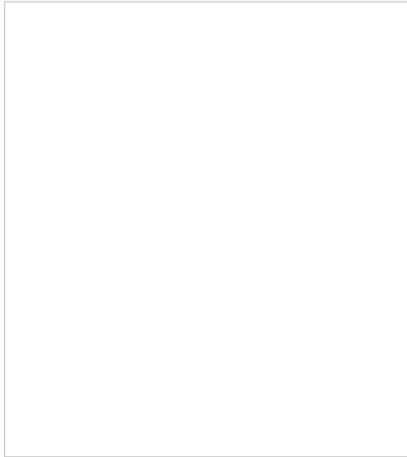
Art-Reach Pre-Visit Activity: Art Talk

Please view the two reproductions with your class and lead a discussion using the following questions as guidelines. There are no "right" answers. The questions are meant to guide the group discussion. Students will re-visit and discuss these works as well as others during the ArtReach visit. The vocabulary in this packet will aid discussion.

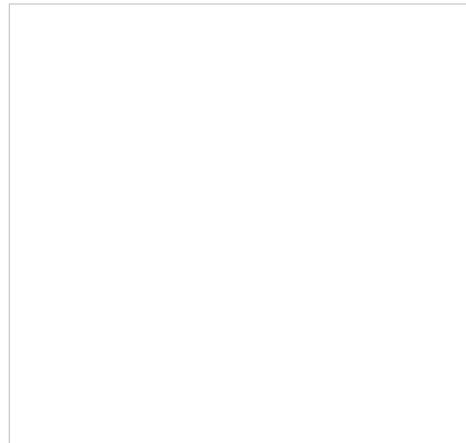
Research and experience have shown that students feel more comfortable when they can connect with something familiar when the Museum educator conducts the program. The students enjoy sharing their insights from the pre-visit discussion with the educator.

James Castle: Idaho Artist (1900-1977)

This visit focuses on artwork in BAM's Permanent Collection by one artist named James Castle. James Castle was born in Garden Valley, Idaho. He developed his own system of expression and communication through the artwork he created on a daily basis. He used found materials and fashioned his own art tools and media. Castle rejected commercial art supplies offered to him, instead using sharpened sticks for pencils and soot mixed with saliva for graphite.



OUTSIDE



INSIDE

James Castle used cast-off and found materials collected from his family home, post office and store.

- Does this artwork look old or new? Why?
- If you could touch this piece of art what do you think the texture would feel like?
- Does it remind you of anything you have in your home?
- What, if anything, do you think this was used for?
- Can you tell what material was used to create this work of art?
- Where do you think James Castle acquired this material?

James Castle (1900-1977)

Untitled, 20 th century
paper, soot, color-printed cardboard
Permanent Collection
Purchase (1998)

James Castle had six siblings. He would often go into the upstairs attic loft to draw and make art privately. He could not hear, speak, read or write and only attended school for a short time. He created art based on his life, where he grew up, his family, experiences, and memories, so his art is largely autobiographical.

- How are the two works different from one another?
- What do the two works have in common?
- Where do you think he got the idea for this artwork?
- Why do you think he created art about his experiences, family, memories etc.?
- Where do you think he found the materials to create this artwork?
- If you were to create art of an autobiographical nature what would you want to communicate to others? What materials would you use, why?

James Castle (1900-1977)

Canada goose, 20 th century

found paper, charcoal, string and soot

Permanent Collection

Purchase (1977)

Vocabulary

James Castle: Idaho Artist (1900-1977)

Medium	A specific kind of artistic technique or means of expression as determined by the materials used or the creative methods involved: the medium of lithography. The materials used in a specific artistic technique: oils as a medium.
Media	The plural of medium.
Outsider Artist	An artist that is self-taught with no formal training in art.
Cast-off materials	Any kind of material that has been used in some way and is ready to be discarded. Essentially, recyclable material or garbage.
Autobiography	The biography (written history) of a person narrated by himself.
Autobiographical Art	Art that expresses or communicates a person's life and history including experiences, memories, family, geography etc.

ArtReach Curricular Connections

James Castle

Teachers can adapt the following curricular connections to meet the needs of any grade level.

Social Studies and Technology

- Have your class research and study the earliest documented evidence of writing, beginning with the pictographs written by the Sumerians of Mesopotamia. In small groups, students can research a specific type of early writing and create a multimedia presentation. This information can then be used to compare the different types of early writing and the people who used them to express themselves. Then have students create a class timeline of early pictorial writing (and more traditional writing), documenting the major changes in the ways people have recorded and communicated events and ideas throughout time.
- Have students create an autobiographical power point presentation over a one-week period. Begin by having a class discussion on different forms of communication and how people express themselves traditionally and non-traditionally (one way would be through sign language). Discuss sounds, gestures, mime, pictures, music etc. Then tell students that they are going to create an autobiographical multimedia slide show called "All About Me."
- Create an interview for James Castle. Have students make a list of questions they would like to ask if he were alive and he were able to speak with them. Include questions about his background, training, daily life and what inspired his work. Write a script for the interview and then present it to the class.
- Have students research how books have been made throughout history and in a variety of cultures. What materials and techniques were used to create the books? How are they similar to or different from the books we use today?

Visual Arts and Language Arts

- Have students look around their homes to find cast-off materials to create their own autobiographical art. Have them save mail, magazines, newspapers, letters, catalogs, wrapping paper, and food packaging for a week. Then ask students to think of a memory or an experience to express pictorially. When they have finished, have them present their work to their peers.

- See if they can figure out what the students are trying to communicate through their art. Ask students why they chose that particular event/memory to communicate information about themselves in their autobiographical works of art.
- Books can be created by students in all grades. Younger students can write about themselves in simple accordion-style folded books. *Who Am I* books can be interactive with overlapping pages of facts that open to reveal answers. Books can be made to explore basic math or art concepts such as shapes, sizes, colors, opposites, numbers, patterns, coin values, etc. Beginning reader books can be created to explore the alphabet, beginning and ending sounds, short vowels, rhymes, sequences. Two internet sources with lesson plans for creating books include www.sdmart.org/education-lans.html#book, and www.dickblick.com/lessonplans/handmadebooks
 - In addition to creating his own books from cast-off materials, James Castle also altered existing books. Have students use books that are going to be donated or thrown away. The covers can be altered as can the interior pages. Books may be themed either to be autobiographical or to correspond with a current unit. Books may be created by individual students or in groups. For an interesting idea on a cultural exchange involving creating altered books, visit www.alteredbooks_princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/Lindabookshtm#class.
 - To help students understand the difference between biographies and autobiographies, have students write "about the author" segments for their books. Take photographs of each student, provide examples of "about the author" segments from printed books, and give each student paper and a pencil. Ask students to briefly read a few of the "about the author" segments and to share the type of information found in each. Discuss that some have pictures and some do not. Explain that this information is a biography of the author and that the voice of the writer is someone other than the author as can be understood by the use of the words *he* and *she* rather than the word *I*. Write biography and autobiography on the board and discuss the differences between the two. Have students write autobiographies and then have them trade autobiographies with their classmates who will then write biographies for that partner classmate. Have students design the layout of the "about the author" segments and decide whether or not they will include the photographs.

Science and Math

- James Castle rejected traditional art materials that were readily available for purchase in stores. Instead he created his own art materials, using sticks for pencils and soot mixed with saliva for graphite. Have students research how art materials are made and what their physical properties are. What are the sources of pigments, clays and pencils? Then have students experiment with a variety of objects to come up with their own materials for creating artwork. What materials will create pigment on paper, etc.?
- Give students a set amount of "money" with which to purchase art materials in your classroom "art supply store." Have paint, brushes, paper, etc. available for purchase. Also provide items that are recycled or "junk" and cost them nothing. Let students plan, budget their money, add up the purchases + Idaho sales tax and then create their art!
- Have students cut cover paper and inside papers to your measurement specifications. Have them cut the cover paper so that it is slightly larger than the pages. Have students place the pages on top of the cover paper and fold the materials together to locate the center. Have students measure and punch three evenly spaced holes down the fold. Have students thread a needle and stitch the book. Have students put the needle through the center hole from the outside first. Next, have students put the needle through one of the other holes followed by the last hole and then back through the first one from the inside. Have students tie the thread together and add beads or tie it into a decorative knot.
- Mixed-media artworks and works of art made with hand-made materials are sometimes difficult to preserve and protect because they require different types of care than artwork made with traditional art materials. Have each student research two types of materials commonly used in mixed-media work and how they affect each other from an archival/preservation standpoint.

Post-Visit Activity: MAKE IT!

To extend the ArtReach experience and connect the visit to your curriculum, please consider using or adapting this suggested lesson.

James Castle **Make a Paper Bag Book**

Discussion

Discuss how books are special places for telling stories, expressing ideas and sharing feelings. Shapes can be cut from colored paper and/or pictures from old magazines and then glued into the books. Stickers can be pasted into the books or they can also be stamped with rubber stamps. First have students think of an idea for a story they would like to share with others. Some ideas to discuss are:

- Tell others about a personal adventure.
- Make an "I Am" book describing the author/maker of the book.
- Describe, in pictures and words, a recent trip with family.
- Illustrate a story about a favorite hero.
- Make up a story about something that might have happened many years ago.

Materials

- A grocery bag, scissors, glue stick, stickers, ink stamps, old postage stamps, felt-tip markers, colored papers, and magazines with lots of pictures.

Instructions



figure 1 **step one**

Carefully take the bag a part along its seam and lay it out on the table.



figure 2 **step two**

Trim off the bottom so that you have a long rectangular sheet left.

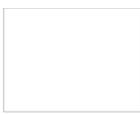


figure 3 **step three**

Fold the paper over lengthwise so that the corners meet. Crease well and then unfold. Fold the paper over in the other direction. Place the corners together and crease well. Do not unfold.



figure 4 **step four**

Fold back one side as shown in figure 4. Place the corners together and crease well. Repeat with the other side.



figure 5

step five

Unfold the last two folds. Holding the folded side in your hand, cut along the center line until you reach the first vertical fold.

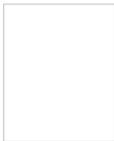


figure 6 **step six**

Open the paper so that eight sections are showing. Fold the page over lengthwise. (If there are pictures or words on the paper they should be on the inside.)

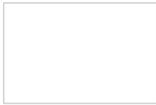


figure 7 **step seven**

Holding on to each side, gently push the ends together to form the pages of the book.



figure 8 **step eight**

Fold the front and back covers around so the corners meet. Crease well. You should have six pages inside for writing and artwork.

www.arts.ufl.edu/art/rt_room/sparkers/artist_book/make_a_book.html

Follow Up Activity

Have students share their books with the class when they are finished. Have the class guess what the book is expressing before the artists reveal what they had intended to convey. Take a trip to the library to look at some books without reading the words. Then try to figure out what the authors/artists were trying to say or express in their books.

Bibliography

James Castle: Idaho Artist (1900-1977)

Aliki. *How a book is made*. NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1988. 32 p. (Trophy Nonfiction Book) ISBN:0064460851. In cartoon format the story of how a book is made is told, from idea to the printing press to the library. The illustrations are colorful and the text is simple, although there is a lot of information in this picture book for young children.

Barker, Albert. *Black on white and read all over: the story of printing* illus. by Anthony D'Adamo. NY: Julian Messner, 1971. 96 p. This is a history of the technology of printing from the Chinese invention of paper to an explanation of how this book was made. There are simple pen and ink illustrations and some photographs. The text is accessible to more accomplished readers.

Borgeois, Paulette. *The amazing paper book*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1990. 79 p. ISBN: 0201523779.

Brookfield, Karen. *Book*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. 63 p. (Eyewitness Books) ISBN: 0679840125; 067994012X (lib.bdg.). This is a fantastic picture book that will appeal to children of all ages. Beautiful color photographs illustrate short text entries in an encyclopedic treatment to all historical and technological aspects of the book.

Carroll, Jeri. *My very first books to make and read: little books designed as a first reading experience for young children* Jeri Carroll and Kathy Dunlavy. Carthage, IL: Good Apple, 1990. 144p. ISBN: 0866535578

Chapman, Gillian and Pam Robson. *Making books: a step by step guide to your own publishing* Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1991. 32 p. ISBN: 1562941690.

Cobb, Vicki. *Writing it down*/ illus. by Marilyn Hafner. NY: J.B. Lippincott, 1989. 32 p. ISBN: 0397323263, 0397323271 (lib. bdg.). The histories of writing tools (paper, pens, pencils, and crayons) are presented in appealing colorful illustrations with a simple text.

Cosner, Shaaron. *"Paper" through the ages*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 1984. 48 p.

James Castle was a self-taught artist who was born deaf and never learned to sign or read or write language in a conventional manner. His drawings, always executed in intimate scale, are expressions of his introspection and life experiences. To create his work, Castle used found materials like scraps from his parentsâ€™ | James Castle in his trailer home on Eugene Street in Boise, Idaho, c. 1970. Courtesy James Castle Collection and Archive LP. Castle memorabilia has been surfacing from within the walls, floorboards, gardens, and lawns, as the Boise compound has undergone recent renovations. â€œWe think weâ€™ve found it all and then something else comes up,â€ says Rachel Reichert, the cultural sites manager for the Boise governmentâ€™s department of arts and history. BAM's Education Department creates Pre-Visit Packets to extend student learning to before and after their ArtReach experience. Art Packs include information on the feature topic, color images, pre-tour activities, suggested curriculum connections, definitions, a bibliography and a classroom art activity sheet. The packets are produced to enhance our ArtReach program, however, they are a great resource on their own. 2010/2011 Pre-Visit Packet Menu. Collecting Birds My Place, Your Place 3-D Sculpture African and Mexican Masks Trees What Art Says Artists of the Northwest James Castle: Idaho Artist

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