

CRAFT IN AMERICA

LOOK! THERE'S A UNICORN! EDUCATION GUIDE

LOOK! THERE'S A UNICORN

"The title is Once Upon a Time in the Future... So she's the mascot for that." - Calder Kamin

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students are introduced to artist Calder Kamin, who infuses her artistic practice with playfulness. Calder Kamin creates large sculptures from recycled materials that often feature mythical creatures. Students will view a segment on Craft In America that shows the artist constructing an imaginative unicorn that is placed in a woodland setting where trail visitors will come upon it. After viewing the video and engaging in discussion, students will plan imaginative creatures using ideas of hybrids as a theme. Students will review why the artist uses recycled materials in her work. Then students will play and experiment with recycled materials to further visualize features for their creatures. Finally, students will consider presenting a surprise in the manner of display of their artworks in school.



Grade Level: K-4

Estimated Time: four 45-minute class periods

Craft In America Theme/Episode: PLAY

Background Information

Artist Calder Kamin transforms trash into beautifully crafted creatures and opportunities to inspire others to be creative and courageous about the future. Nature's endless ability to reuse and adapt motivates her to eliminate waste and reimagine it as art. Kamin's creative reuse art projects and public workshops have traveled to museums across the states including The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art American, The American Museum of Natural History, The Contemporary Austin, The i.d.e.a. Museum, and The Amon Carter Museum of American Art. She was the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art's Art Truck Artist, the first AIR at the Beach Museum of Art, and Artist-in-Residence at BreckCreate, Landmark Apartments, and the DoSeum, San Antonio's Children's Museum. Kamin is a board member of Austin Creative Reuse, a non-profit that diverts community waste to artists, crafters, and educators as resources.

Key Concepts

- Artists play and experiment with materials when making art.
- Artists can imagine creatures and turn them into an artwork.
- Artists can add surprising elements to their art.

Critical Questions

- Why do artists play with materials when making art?
- How do artists imagine creatures and turn them into an artwork?
- How can artists surprise people with their art?

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Objectives

Students will:

- Students will understand that playing, or experimenting, with materials is a way of developing ideas for art making.
- Students will develop an imaginative creature.
- Students will imagine and implement ways to surprise someone with an artwork.

Vocabulary

Beast, experiment, hybrid, installation, mascot, mythical, recycle, transform

Interdisciplinary Connections

- Language Arts: Examining mythical beasts and hybrids in classic and contemporary fairy tales and other stories can help inspire ideas for creating imaginary characters.
- Science: Calder Kamin mentions that estrogen in waterways has caused mutations in frogs. This could be an interesting and accessible lesson for students.
- Science: Technology is creating more human hybrid forms, in which we can get such interventions as replacement joints, electronic devices embedded to enhance hearing, and robotic walkers to increase mobility. Highlighting these examples in a lesson is valuable for students' understanding of themselves and others.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Visual Arts/Creating #VA:Cr1.1.4a
Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem.
Process Component: Investigate/Plan/Make
Anchor Standard: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Visual Arts/Creating #VA:Cr.1.2.1a
Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.
Process Component: Investigate/Plan/Make
Anchor Standard: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Visual Arts/Creating #VA:Cr.2.2.4a
When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.
Process Component: Investigate
Anchor Standard: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Visual Arts/Presenting #VA:Pr4.1.3a
Investigate and discuss possibilities and limitations of spaces, including electronic, for exhibiting artwork.
Process Component: Select
Anchor Standard: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation
- Visual Arts/Reflecting #VA:Re.7.1.3a
Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.
Process Component: Perceive
Anchor Standard: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

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Resources and Materials for Teaching Resources

- Craft in America PLAY episode, craftinamerica.org/episode/play, Calder Kamin's segment, and Craft in America's website, craftinamerica.org
- Calder Kamin's website, calderkamin.com.
- Visual examples of hybrids for the classroom: Images of comic book characters, mythical beasts, fairy tale animals, cartoon creatures, video game characters, and images of hybrid technology such as robotic boots for human use.
- Create a visual quote for the classroom. On a whiteboard or on a poster board, print in large letters this quote from Calder Kamin: "Play is another word for experimenting."
- Optional: clipboards; enough for two to three students to share for end of lesson creature hunt

Worksheets

- Worksheet 1: You Can Imagine a Mythical Creature
- Worksheet 2: There's a Unicorn in the Forest!

Materials

- Sketchbooks
- Pencils and Markers
- Scissors
- Recycled materials as loose parts for constructing: plastic utensils, fast food containers, milk cartons, bottles, lids and caps, newspapers, magazines, cereal and snack boxes, marker caps, plastic bits and pieces from packaging, and the like. In the video, Calder Kamin shows an array of recycled materials including small plastic toys.
- Craft materials as loose parts for constructing: pipe cleaners, buttons, colored wire, beads, cardboard tubes, egg cartons, strips of fabric, fake fur, corks, yarn, tongue depressors, bamboo skewers, toothpicks etc.
- NOTE: Place the recycled and craft parts in boxes or on trays for students to handle and choose from.
- Non-electric hand drill and bits (more than one drill may be helpful since it will be a popular tool)
- Pliers for wire; diagonal cutters for cutting wire
- Scrap piece of wood at least 1/2 inch thick as a base for protecting tables from drilling
- Tapes, yarn, string, wire, brass fasteners, white glue and hot glue for connecting parts of the creatures.
- Wire, string, tape and tools needed for hanging and/or otherwise displaying creatures in school.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

(one 45-minute class period)

Students will view the video and answer questions that have been placed on the board. After a class discussion, students will use Worksheet 1: You Can Imagine a Mythical Creature to imagine and invent their own hybrid creature. Students will see several demonstrations on methods of arranging parts to make a whole, ideas for rethinking the use of parts, and methods for attaching

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parts together. Then students will gather some materials from the recycling and craft parts boxes, and play/experiment with trying out various arrangements to recreate their creature in 3-D form. After construction, when their creatures are finished they will use Worksheet 2: There's a Unicorn in the Forest! to consider elements of surprise in preparation for how they would like to display their hybrid creation.

Before Viewing

Introduce the scope of the lesson to students, sharing the key concepts, critical questions, and objectives. Share the quote on the board with students and ask students to think about it. Today's artist says, "Play is another word for experimenting." That is what she does when she makes art. When you make art does it feel like playing? How is experimenting like playing? Allow students to share their ideas. Let students know they will get to play- and experiment- with materials like the artist they will learn about.

Have the following questions on the board, ready for watching the film. You might also hand them out on a sheet for the older grades. Tell students to listen for the answers, then pause the video as each question is answered and ask for student responses. Use the discussion guide to help with the answers.

Discussion Guide for Teachers

1. Why does Calder Kamin use trash for her artwork?
Calder Kamin says it is her "mission" to use garbage and turn it into something beautiful, because people create garbage and so she thinks people should clean it up. She also says, "Nature never wastes; that's why I reuse. That's my mission."
2. Why does Calder Kamin make a unicorn for her sculpture?
She sees a giant troll built of wood in the area, and is inspired to create another "mythical beast", since a troll is a mythical creature, too.
3. What does "mythical beast" mean?
Mythical means imaginary or pretend. It is something that is not real. Beast is a term used for animals, and sometimes means a large creature that may be a little scary but it doesn't have to be scary.
4. What did Calder Kamin like to make when she was young?
Calder Kamin took her art box everywhere, and she asked people "What is your favorite animal?" and then made a little animal out of clay for the person.
5. What are some of the recycled ingredients Calder Kamin uses?
She uses sleds, marker caps, plastic bottles, fast food dishes, tiny plastic toys, newspapers, beads from party necklaces, cans, etc.

After Viewing

Allow students to ask questions and share thoughts about the artist. Let them know they will also be creating a mythical creature out of recycled materials.

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Studio Production

(three 45-minute class periods)

Hand out Worksheet 1: You Can Imagine a Mythical Beast. On this sheet students will draw some favorite animals and then create a hybrid drawing by combining different parts of the different animals. Go over the worksheet with students and make sure they understand what to do. Referring to the visuals of hybrids, ask: What are some hybrids you see hanging on the board? Can you think of any others? Gather students for a demonstration on creating hybrids. Space the remaining demonstrations out when students appear to be ready for the next part of studio work.

Demonstrations

Drawing hybrids

Repeat the idea of hybrids being made from more than one species. Ask students what animals Calder Kamin's unicorn is created from. (It has the head, body, and legs of a horse. It has the horn of a narwhal or rhinoceros. It has the wings of a bird.) Demonstrate Worksheet 1 by showing students how you would sketch or doodle two animals, and then mix up their parts to make the hybrid.

Playful experimenting with materials

As students work on their sheet, pause to show them the boxes of loose parts. Show them what is available in the recycled parts box and the craft materials box of supplies. Hold up various parts and suggest how one item could be a body, another a leg, etc. As you lay parts on a table surface, rearrange them saying your ideas out loud: "This plastic soda bottle holder might make a good jellyfish...If I use this bottle for the body of my bear, the pipe cleaners would be very skinny legs. But I kind of like that" (or not). Encourage students to gather some materials to play and experiment with when they are ready. Let them know: You may return materials if after experimenting you think some are not right for your project, and try some different parts.

Connecting parts to make a whole creature

After students have played/experimented with arranging some materials, demonstrate connecting pieces. This will be experimental, too, as they play with different materials and try different connecting methods. Set up a glue gun in a place you will be able to monitor and demonstrate how to use a tongue depressor instead of a finger to "break" the glue thread and smooth the glue. Show the use of hole punches for plastic, cardboard, etc. and what they work on and what they do not. Demonstrate drilling, which will work for thicker plastic pieces or plastic in which a hole punch can't reach the desired location. To drill: First, clamp or use duct tape to attach the wood to what will be the drilling location surface. Show students how to tape their piece to be drilled (such as a plastic bottle) securely to the wood (so they have both hands to hold the drill) and then how to carefully place the drill and crank the handle to make the hole. Show methods and ideas for attaching pieces with wire, brass fasteners, tape, and/or glue. Ask students what works well and what is good and not so good about each method.

Finish with care

When students are almost finished, ask for a final check of their projects. Point out how Calder Kamin added wings to the unicorn so that people wouldn't climb on it and possibly get hurt (or hurt the artwork.) Talk about checking for rough or pointy parts on their creatures that can be fixed by bending inwards (such as wire) or trimmed. Have them consider "quality control" to

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make sure their creatures are fastened together well and will not fall apart when hung up or displayed. Help them reinforce connections where needed, or add last minute details.

CLOSING STRATEGIES

After students have finished their creatures, hand out Worksheet 2: There's a Unicorn in the Forest! Engage students in a discussion about how they can surprise people in school by where they place their creatures. Ask students how Calder Kamin surprised people by where she placed the unicorn. She states: "She's a really big surprise in the forest. People come off the trail just drawn to her."

Help students develop a plan for how to hang or place their creatures throughout school. They can use the back of Worksheet 2 for the following reflection activity.

Reflection

Students can research the element of surprise and extend the lesson by mapping the location of their creatures in school. Tell students they are researchers looking for mythical creatures. Using clipboards with paper and pencil, take a tour through the school as students find and record their own and others' creature locations. (The clipboards are useful and also tend to increase students' enthusiasm for acting as researchers.) They can make a sketched or doodled list or create a map with locations marked. Have students place a star on their page next to any creatures found in especially surprising hiding spots.

Assessment

In discussions with the class and with individual students throughout the lesson; by examining the students' worksheets; and by witnessing the students' studio work, it should be evident that the student:

- Understands that playing, or experimenting, with materials is a way of developing ideas for art making.
- Developed ideas for an imaginative creature.
- Imagined and implemented ways to surprise someone with an artwork in its design and/or its placement.

Additional Resources

Another Craft in America featured artist who uses recycled materials is Leandro Gómez Quintero. He creates models of vehicles that are in daily use in his hometown in Cuba.

Extensions

Consider creating an ongoing classroom recycling center; a large box in which students can add materials for use in projects. Such a collection may inspire future artworks.

Authors

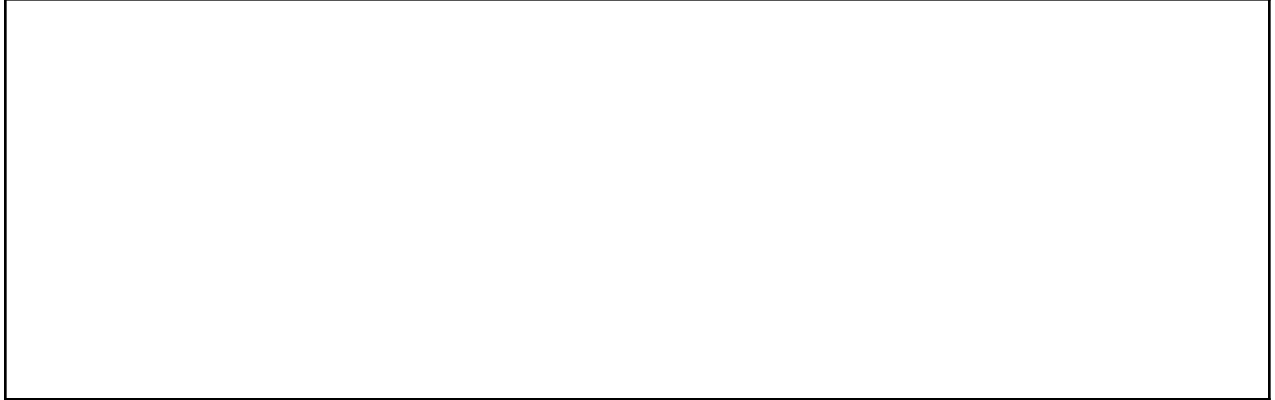
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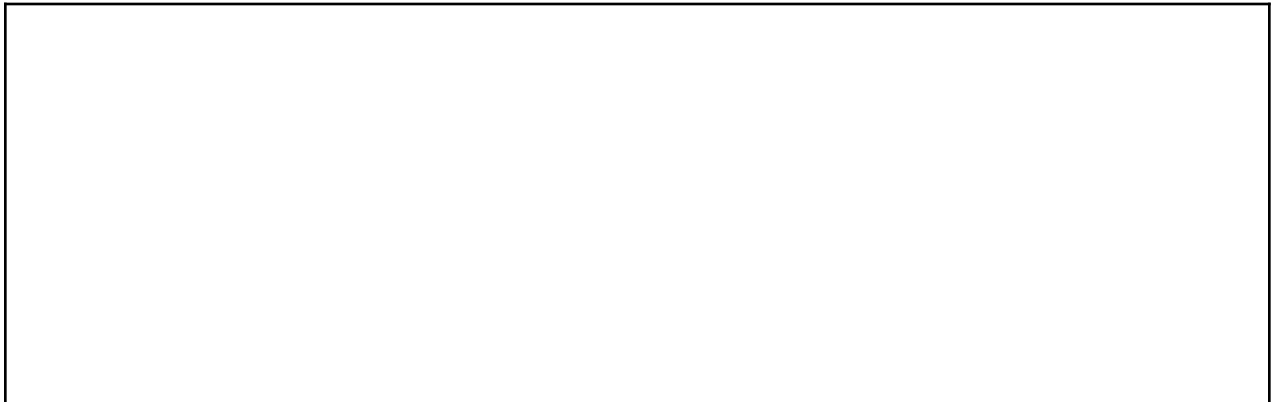
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Worksheet #1: You Can Imagine a Mythical Creature

It is time to experiment with creating a hybrid creature. Draw two or three favorite animals below:



Think about Calder Kamin's unicorn. It is a hybrid. It has the head, body, and legs of a horse. It has the horn of a narwhal or rhinoceros. It has the wings of a bird. Try mixing up parts of your favorite animals and draw the new creature here:



When you have a drawing that you like, choose some parts from the boxes of recycled materials and craft materials your teacher showed you. Arrange them to look like your hybrid creature. Then draw your plan here:

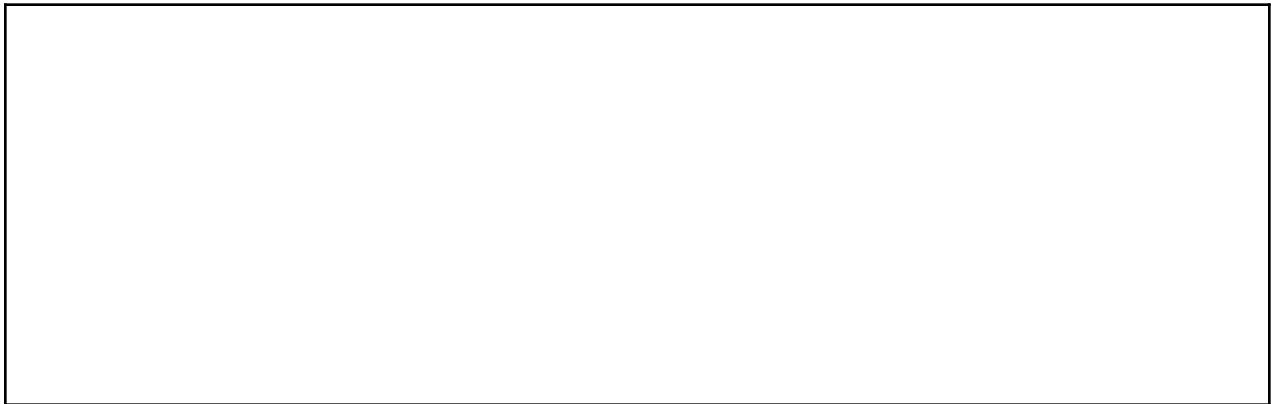


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Worksheet 2: There's a Unicorn in the Forest!

Where could you place your mythical creature in school that would surprise people?
Make three drawings of your creature in different places in school.



Will your creature be safe from being broken in those places?

Why or why not?

Choose a place you think your creature will be safe.

On the back of this sheet, you can make your map of the mythical creatures you find in school.