

*Discovering the Story:
A City and Its Culture*

FIND THE FORM

An Art Enrichment
Activity for Grades 9-12

Based on
Reception Dress
by Selina Cadwallader



Selina Cadwallader (active 1870-1886)
Reception Dress, 1886
Gift of Wilmar Antiques c/o Mr. Maurice Oshry, 1971.550 a-c

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Objectives.....	3
Vocabulary.....	3
Materials	3
Brainstorming	3
Procedure	4
Videoconference Preparation	4
Academic Content Standards	5
National Standards: Visual Arts	5
Ohio Standards: Visual Arts	6

OBJECTIVES

- Students will look at an image of the Cadwallader *Reception Dress* and examine how this object distorts the look of form of the figure underneath it.
- Students will also explore methods the seamstress utilized to transform flat fabric into volumetric form.
- Students will then attach paper to a structure to change its form in a dramatic way.

VOCABULARY

Definitions can be found in the Glossary on the *Discovering the Story* Website at <http://www.discoveringthestory.org/goldenage/dress/glossary.asp>

Form

Shape

Two-dimensional

Three-dimensional

Volume

Texture

Negative space

MATERIALS

- Plastic bottle
- White paper
- Scissors
- White glue
- Tape
- Clamping devices--for example: paper clips, clothespins, office clips, etc.
- Image of the *Reception Dress* at http://www.cetconnect.org/discoveringthestory/goldenage/images/dress_full.jpg

BRAINSTORMING

Ask students to look at an image of the Cadwallader *Reception Dress* and to discuss how its form is different than the form of the figure underneath it. What areas of the body does it change or distort? What clues can this give us to what was considered the ideal body of 1886? How is the fabric manipulated in different areas of the dress to create various forms--is it bunched, stitched, folded, cut into shapes then sewn together? Tell students that they will be taking inspiration from this garment to create a covering that disguises the form of a structure and changes it in a dramatic way. Instead of using fabric and a body, they will be using paper and a plastic bottle; instead of creating a literal outfit over the bottle, they will be creating abstract form.

PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Ask students to remove the label from their bottles and to carefully examine its form --its symmetry, smoothness, and regularity. Ask them to make a decision to distort and change specific areas of the object with a paper covering, taking inspiration from how the dress was made.
- Have students experiment with cutting varied shapes out of paper.
- Ask students to manipulate these paper shapes in various ways and attach them to the bottle. Note that first pieces will need to be taped to the bottle, while subsequent pieces will be glued. Students may need to clamp pieces of paper together as they dry.
- Keep adding paper to the form of the bottle until its original form is completely abstracted and disguised.

VIDEOCONFERENCE PREPARATION

Arrange the sculptures together on a table to discuss. Which ones are the most interesting and why? Which most distort the form of the structure? Which create the most interesting forms/textures? Which manipulate paper in the most unexpected ways? How does this experience help you to appreciate the art of a nineteenth-century seamstress? What questions about dressmaking would you like to ask Museum staff during the videoconference?

“The work of art itself is . . . a vibrant, magical, and exemplary object which returns us to the world in some way more open and enriched.”

*Susan Sontag
essayist*

ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

NATIONAL STANDARDS: VISUAL ARTS

Standard 1: Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts.

Level IV (Grades 9–12)

Benchmark 1: Applies media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that one's intentions are carried out in artworks.

Benchmark 2: Understands how the communication of ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes one uses.

Standard 2: Knows how to use structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art.

Benchmark 1: Understands how the characteristics and structures of art are used to accomplish commercial, persona, communal, or other artistic intentions.

Benchmark 2: Understands the effectiveness of various artworks in terms of organizational structures and functions.

Benchmark 3: Knows how organizational principles and functions can be used to solve specific visual arts problems.

Standard 3: Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts.

Benchmark 1: Understands how visual, spatial, temporal, and functional values of artworks are tempered by culture and history.

Benchmark 2: Applies various subjects, symbols, and ideas in one's artworks.

Standard 4: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Benchmark 1: Knows a variety of historical and cultural contexts regarding characteristics and purposes of works of art.

Benchmark 2: Knows the function and meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.

Benchmark 3: Understands relationships among works of art in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture.

Standard 5: Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others.

Benchmark 1: Identifies intentions of those creating artworks.

Benchmark 2: Understands some of the implications of intention and purpose in particular works of art.

Benchmark 3: Knows how specific works are created and relate to historical and cultural contexts.

Benchmark 4: Understands how various interpretations can be used to understand and evaluate works of visual art.

OHIO STANDARDS: VISUAL ARTS

Creative Expression and Communication: Students create artworks that demonstrate understanding of materials, processes, tools, media, techniques, and available technology. They understand how to use art elements, principles, and images to communicate their ideas in a variety of visual forms.

Grades 9-12

Benchmark A: Demonstrates mastery of materials, concepts, and personal concentration when creating original artworks.

Benchmark B: Creates expressive artworks that demonstrate a sense of purpose and understanding of the relationship between materials, techniques, and ideas.

Historical, Social, and Cultural Contexts: Students understand the impact of visual art on history, culture, and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social, and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social, and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in people's lives.

Grades 9-12

Benchmark A: Explains how and why visual art forms develop in the contexts in which they were made (e.g., social, historical, and political)

Benchmark B: Compares works of art to one another in terms of the historical, cultural, social, and political influences evident in the works.

Benchmark C: Explains the characteristics and content of culturally and historically representative artworks to demonstrate understanding of how visual art reflects historical issues, events, and cultural traditions.

Connections, Relationships, and Applications: Students connect and apply their learning of visual art to the study of other art areas and disciplines outside the arts. They understand relationships between and among concepts and ideas that are common across subjects in the curriculum. Students recognize the importance of lifelong learning and experience in visual art.

Grades 9-12

Benchmark B: Formulates and solves a visual art problem using strategies and perspectives from other disciplines.

Analyzing and Responding: Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter, and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships, and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgment about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

Grades 9-12

Benchmark A: Applies the knowledge and skills of art criticism to conduct in-depth analyses of works of art.

Benchmark C: Critiques their own work and the works of peers and other artist on the basis of the formal, technical, and expressive aspect in the works.