

# 3-D Collage

During the 20th century, many artists were interested in making collages. Most people think of collage as being made only out of paper, but many 20th century artists began using three-dimensional (3-D) objects to make eye-catching, sculptural collages.

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1890, the artist Man Ray was one of the first makers of 3-D collage. He worked for the majority of his artistic career in Paris.

On the right you can see his 1921 3-D collage titled *The Gift*. For this artwork, Man Ray glued tacks to the bottom of an iron, making the iron useless.



Man Ray, *The Gift*, painted flatiron and tacks, 1921, Museum of Modern Art



Meret Oppenheim, *Object*, fur and tea set, 1936, Museum of Modern Art

Meret Oppenheim was a German-born 20th century artist who created many 3-D collages. Like Man Ray, Meret Oppenheim's artworks were often nonsensical.

Her most well-known artwork is pictured to the left and is titled *Object*. In order to make this artwork, she covered a tea set in fur. Would you want to drink out of this teacup?

## Playing with Usefulness

You might have noticed that both Man Ray's and Meret Oppenheim's artworks make the objects included totally useless. For instance, the tacks on Man Ray's *The Gift* make it impossible to use the iron to actually iron clothes, and the fur on Meret Oppenheim's *Object* makes it difficult to drink out of the teacup.



Meret Oppenheim, *Ma Gouvernante*, metal plate, shoes, string, paper, 1936, Moderna Museet, Sweden.

Many 20th century 3-D collage artists, like Man Ray and Meret Oppenheim, made the objects included in their artworks useless in order to make the final artworks humorous. Artists used this humor to comment on daily modern life, arguing that -- much like the artworks they were creating -- modernity was absurd.

## Try It Yourself!

Now you can try making your own 3-D collage. In order to do this, follow these steps:

1. Find some household objects that you would like to include in your 3-D collage.
2. Take some time to think about these objects. Do they have a purpose? What tasks can this object help you to complete?
3. Think of ways that you can make the objects less useful in a funny way. We have already talked about Man Ray's *The Gift* and Meret Oppenheim's *Object*. Another good source of inspiration could be Meret Oppenheim's *Ma Gouvernante* (pictured above), in which the artist makes a pair of dress shoes unwearable in order to make them look like food.
4. Assemble your 3-D collage!

## Reflection Questions

1. How is making a 3-D collage different from making a collage out of paper-based materials? How is it similar?
2. Are the objects in your 3-D collage still useful? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that turning objects into a 3-D collage has changed the meaning of the objects? Why or why not?