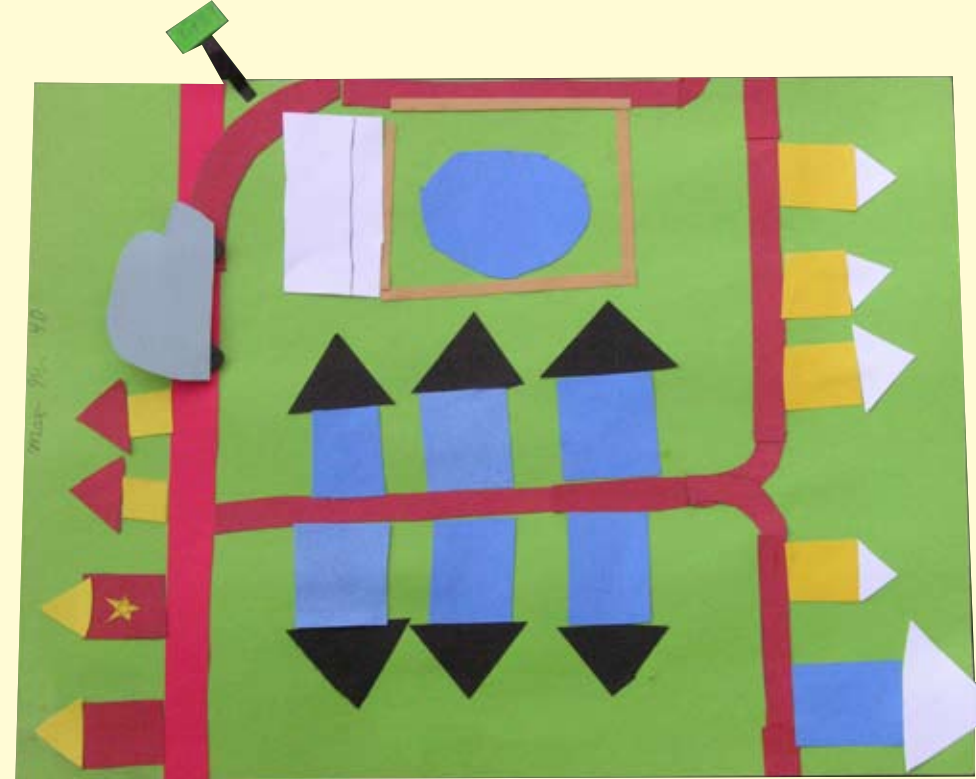


The View from Here

Nancy Walkup



Objectives

Students will:

- discuss different points of view or perspectives in stories and in artworks.
- discuss how artists choose specific points of view when creating artwork.
- create an effective collage map that shows an unusual point of view.

Materials

- reproduction of *Canyon: Broadway and Exchange Place*, Berenice Abbott, the Phillips Collection, Washington DC.
- reproduction of *Across the Strip*, John Kane, the Phillips Collection, Washington DC.
- construction paper, assorted colors, 9 x 9½" (23 x 31 cm), one per student
- assorted colors construction paper strips, ¾ x 12" (2 x 31 cm)
- assorted colors construction paper scraps
- scissors
- fine-point black markers

Vocabulary

- **point of view:** the side or angle from which an artist chooses to show subject matter in an artwork.
- **bird's eye view:** a view from above looking down.
- **worm's eye view:** a view from below looking up.

Last January I was fortunate to teach art in Beijing, China for a week at a Global Knowledge

Exchange/Jersey Cow/Davis Publications Innovation Camp. We developed four elementary art lessons based on artworks in the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. Works of art that depict cities were chosen because of the familiarity students from both capitals would have with city life.

Comparing Points of View

The artworks for this lesson depict opposite viewpoints of city scenes. *Canyon: Broadway and Exchange Place* is a worm's eye view; *Across the Strip* is a bird's eye view. Both are available online at the Phillips Collection Web site, though other similar artworks could certainly be substituted. The studio activity is a collage map—a bird's eye view of students' neighborhoods or other familiar locations.

In China we began the lesson by showing and discussing the free program Google Earth. Google Earth allows you to access satellite views of the world from up close and far away. We looked at famous places around the world (Forbidden City, Eiffel Tower, and Grand Canyon) and zoomed in on Peking University's Allied Elementary School (our host) in Beijing. We com-

pared the two artworks from the Phillips Collection, and then had students create their collage maps. When the collage maps were complete, students took turns sharing and discussing their maps with their fellow students. This lesson has now been taught in China, Washington DC, and Texas and the variety of results is a joy to see. I invite you to try it with your students.

Setup

Cut construction paper strips and assemble other materials. Find examples of aerial photography in books or online. Set up Google Earth to show students.

Engage

Remind students that writers choose a viewpoint, perspective, or way of looking at things, for a story. If the writer chooses the first person viewpoint, the narrator—the person telling the story—uses words such as I, me, and my. Explain that when a story is written in the first-person viewpoint, a reader sees everything through the narrator's eyes. Explain that artists also select a point of view when they create artworks.

Explore: Art

Display *Canyon*. Tell students it is the work of a photographer named Berenice Abbot. What is unusual about

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- Add interesting details to the collage with fine-point black markers.

Distribute materials

As students begin to work, offer these tips and reminders:

- Choose a horizontal or vertical format. Notice how the tall format of *Canyon* allows viewers to see tall buildings; the squarish format of *Across the Strip* allows viewers to see buildings, fields, and sky in the distance.
- Add colorful and interesting details to your collage map. Include features that will help others recognize the neighborhood or area you chose to show.

Assess

Have students display and discuss their collage maps. 🌀

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.

WEB LINKS

earth.google.com

www.phillipscollection.org

this point of view, or the angle from which Abbott shows these New York City buildings? (it makes you feel as though you're lying on your back, looking up). What do you notice about the size of the buildings? (they look especially large, as if they are falling on you) Explain that in art this is called a worm's eye view.

Display *Across the Strip*. Tell students that John Kane, a Pittsburgh artist, painted this work. What do you see in this painting? (people, buildings, hills in distance, sky) From what point of view do you see this scene? (above it, looking down).

Tell students that this is an example of a bird's eye view. By painting the scene as though he were high in the air, the artist was able to show things that are far away. Would you describe these works as highly detailed? Why or why not? (photograph lets us see building details; painting lets us see a broad view of the city)

How do the different points of view change the amount of detail each artist could show? (photograph shows more building details because the viewpoint is from closer up; painting shows more of the city than photograph does, because the viewpoint is from much farther away.) How do the different points of view change the amount of detail each artist can show?

Create

Tell students they will create a collage map that shows a bird's eye view of their school, neighborhood, or home. Explain that the format—the tall or wide placement of the paper—can contribute to the point of view they choose to show.

Have students select the subject for their collage map. Stimulate thinking with questions such as: How do you think the roads and buildings where you live look like from a hot-air balloon or low-flying airplane? In what direction do the roads go? Which roads are the largest or most important? Which buildings are the largest? What three-dimensional features can be added?

Review

- Choose a color for background paper. Position and glue strips of construction paper in place for the roads for the chosen view and subject. Use horizontal, vertical, or diagonal strips as needed. Curved roads may also be cut.
- Cut construction paper as needed into shapes to represent buildings, fences, vehicles, and other features of the landscape. Make and glue in place the largest shapes first, then add smaller ones.

