

Chow Time: Exploring the Work of Robert Rauschenberg

Inspiration: Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925–2008). *Calf Startena* from the *Chow Bag* series (detail below), 1977. Offset lithograph with hand-stitching. Gift of Mr. John Rosenthal, 1981 ([81.10.2f](#)).

Ages: 5+ (through adult)

Duration: Open-ended

Materials needed: Paper and pencil; old magazines and other print sources/household objects for collage work; scissors; glue or tape; optional: colored pencils, markers, or crayons.

Introduction: In the twentieth century, there was a growth in mass manufacturing, or the making of articles on a large scale using machinery. As a result, people across large geographic areas and even the world gained access to similar items and became familiar with similar product design. In reaction to commercial visuals and branding, artists began to question what qualified as a work of art, what materials could be used to create a work of art, and what a finished artwork looked like. It turns out that art—and the potential for art—is all around us, even in everyday items—it just depends on how you look at it.



Look

Take a close look at *Calf Startena* from the *Chow Bag* series.

- What’s going on in this work?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

Think

- What materials were used to create this piece? How do you think the artist made the work?
- How are color, shape, and pattern used in the work?
- How do words and text connect to the images in the piece and how do they interact with each other?

Connect

Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) was an American painter and graphic artist known for combining non-traditional art materials and found objects in his work, and for a practice of questioning the difference between everyday products and fine artworks. *Calf Startena* is one of a series of six prints based on paper collages—artistic compositions made of various materials glued onto a surface—that the artist created in 1977. Rauschenberg featured a different domesticated animal for each print, using the feed or “chow” bags that Purina Mills manufactured specifically for that animal as the basis for each work.

Rauschenberg used different techniques like offset lithography and screen printing to replicate these signature images, and then further customized each impression using a variety of mixed media. Offset lithography is a process in which images on metal plates are transferred (offset) to rubber blankets or rollers and then to the print media, usually paper. Screen printing is a process in which ink is pressed through a stencilled mesh screen to create a printed design.

Do

1. Rauschenberg remixed everyday objects like these animal feed bags into artworks through manipulation and collage, layering multiple graphics, patterns, thread, paint, and other art mediums upon one another to create something new.
2. Take a few minutes to find an everyday item in your home that makes use of graphics—visual images or designs that inform, illustrate, or entertain, in its design. What words or reactions come to mind when you observe this item? How and when do you use the item? What do you like or dislike about it?
3. Using materials available to you, remix your chosen item into a new visual image. If you only have paper and pencil, sketch! If you have access to old magazines and print materials, scissors, and glue/tape, cut out shapes, colors, words, and images to recreate the graphics of

the item in your own way. As you work, think about how you use the item and observe your own reactions to the process. You can also use three dimensional objects to do the same exercise.

Reflect

Compare your creative remix to the original item. How did you change the item to say something new to your viewer? How does your remix reflect your own emotions, interests, and ideas?

Share

Take a photo of your work and post it to Instagram using the hashtags #RobertRauschenberg and #MuseumFromHome, and tag @HudsonRiverMuseum.