PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY
Exploring Found Materials

Level: Ages 3 and up

Objectives
- To see everyday materials in new and different ways.
- To develop and encourage creative problem solving and visual language skills.
- To explore creative alternatives to buying and using traditional art supplies.

Vocabulary
Collage – A collection of materials combined to make a whole. From the French coller which means to stick or glue.
Assemblage – A sculptural form of collage in which natural and/or found materials are combined to create the whole. In a mixed medial assemblage, some drawing, painting or sculptural elements may be included.
Construction – The most three dimensional type of collage. A form made of combined materials and found objects.
Found Object – An item which is found rather than purchased or created and not originally intended as art but found to have some aesthetic value.

Introduction
In the process of painting the tissue papers used in the collages he creates for his book illustrations, Eric Carle began to explore the aesthetic qualities of some of the by-products of this process. This playful exploration led to some assemblages and found materials constructions that may be on view in the galleries when your class visits the museum. These works are referred to as Eric Carle’s independent or non-book art. The activities suggested below are a way to begin or continue exploring found materials and to consider “what is art?”

Procedure
Have your students collect and bring in clean found objects. You may want to send them home with a list of possible items: milk caps, yogurt lids, buttons, empty thread spools, dried up paint brushes, smooth wood scraps, old keys, shells, corks, used paint stirrers, etc. Anything that is clean and safe is acceptable.

When the collections have been brought back to school, gather everyone’s contributions into one pile. As a class or in small groups, have students talk about, study, and sort the objects. This process of observing, feeling, comparing, and contrasting invites descriptive vocabulary and starts students’ thinking about each object’s potential uses.

Suggested activities designed to encourage students to carefully note each object’s unique attributes
- Explore and sort found objects by shape and/or color into transparent containers.
- Explore and sort found objects by properties relating to the senses of touch, smell, and hearing.
- Have students discuss and execute how they would like to sort the objects.
- Invite students to tell or write stories about the objects.
- Have students choose one object for a studied drawing that fills or extends beyond a 12”x 18” or 18”x 24” piece of paper. This exercise encourages slow and careful observation. Experiment with different mediums i.e. white chalk on black or other dark construction paper. When drawings are complete, have students circulate to see each object next to its drawn counterpart.
- Have students write descriptive sentences or paragraphs about one object or category of objects, without naming it/them. After reading descriptions out loud, group members can try to figure out which object or collection was described.

**When the work is done, the learning isn’t over…**

Ideas for extending the experience:
- If your students engage in a number of the above activities, display the work (drawings, lists and writings) together with the objects until after your visit to the museum so that students have time to become familiar with their classmates’ work.
- Math connections: Use multiples of the same objects for fun and tactile ways to explore counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and fractions.

**Resources**

Books about assemblage or working with found materials:

**Further Investigation**

Selected artists who work with found & recycled materials:
- Cornell, Joseph
- Bryan, Ashley
- Duchamp, Marcel
- Friedman, Tom
- Schwitters, Kurt
- Steig, Jeanne
- Whipple, Lynn