



## Mini-Lesson: Found Sound, Art & Music

---

### OVERVIEW

The use of an everyday object in Shapiro's *Paper Cut* provides the opportunity to introduce students to the Found Object movement in art and music.

### LEARNING GOAL

Students will learn about the history of found objects in art and music.

### RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- [Music and Art Made from Found Objects](#) reading
- music samples from website resources in the article

### PROCESS

NOTE: Share this aspect of your curriculum for *Paper Cut* with your visual art teachers. They may be willing to integrate the found object visual art into their curriculum. They can also provide art posters of found object visual art for your students to look at and describe.

1. Read the article "[Music and Art Made from Found Objects](#)" in the rehearsal or assign it to students as homework. Ask them to be ready to talk about THREE interesting things they learned from their reading.
2. Listen to short musical examples from STOMP, Aural Savage Hot Bed, or other found sound groups in class. The article includes websites for these groups.
3. Encourage students to investigate one or more of the websites listed in the article. You might sample the sites in class to tease their interests.
4. Encourage students to go more deeply into the subject of found sound music. They might:
  - Conduct an independent inquiry project on instruments and music made from found objects.
  - Create a display or bulletin board of their research.
  - Write a report on their findings.
  - Search for objects, make a collection of found sound instruments, and be able to provide the reasons for each sound they've selected.
  - Create musical works on these instruments and record their music. This might require them to enlist the help of other students to form an ensemble.
  - Play a found sound compositions in a school performance.

# Music and Art Made from Found Objects

Everyday objects are often selected by musicians and artists to create music and visual art. Artists use these “found objects” in ways that are quite different from their original purpose. When they are used for art and music, they have an artistic purpose. The objects might be from nature or human made but when used by the artist, the objects become visual art or musical sound makers. The term “found object” is used for both the art works and the items that were used in their creation.



This sculpture, *Tea Bird*, is an example of found object visual art. *Tea Bird* was created by Colin George Jeffry in 2008. At first glance, the image appears to be a metal bird. If you look closely, certain objects come into focus. There are spatulas (feet), tongs (beak), a metal tea pot (body), and other objects, all used in a new way. See the details in a large photo at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Metal\\_Bird.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Metal_Bird.png).

In the visual arts, objects might be used in their original form, or they may be modified in some way. They are not considered art in their original form. But when the artist's imagination and planning puts them to a new use, they become art.

When found object visual art emerged in the early 20th century, it turned the art world upside down. People have assumptions about what art is and what it is not. Seeing art made from everyday objects challenged those assumptions and made people uncomfortable.



The French artist, Marcel Duchamp, was a significant artist in found object art. Duchamp lived in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His name for found object art was “readymade.” “The Bicycle” was his first readymade sculpture. It is now on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. See “The Bicycle” by visiting [http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=81631](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=81631).

## FOUND OBJECTS IN MUSIC

Musicians were also experimenting with various kinds of found objects at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Actually, making music with natural objects is as old as music itself. The earliest musical instruments were the original found object instruments.

Creating music from found objects usually takes one of two paths. The first is music

made with the actual found objects used as the instruments. Many styles of both classical and popular music feature natural sounds such as whistles, bicycle bells, rocks, 5 gallon buckets, pots and pans, and sheet metal.



Composer Peter O'Gorman plays pots and pot lids in his piece *7 Objects*

The other path is the practice of sampling; using previously recorded music as part of a new work. With advanced technology, sampling flourishes today in many popular music genres such as hip hop.

### SEE, HEAR, & LEARN MORE ABOUT FOUND SOUND MUSIC

Many musicians and musical organizations use the web to demonstrate and present their found sound musical creations. Here are a few sites where you can see and hear exciting examples of found sound music and learn about the groups.

- The Minneapolis band **Savage Aural Hotbed** creates sounds with some very odd objects which they call "found instruments." Their favorites include domestic appliances, power tools, and oil drums combined with bass guitar, electronically modified horns, and vocals.

Their group name is explained this way:

Savage – As in wild

Aural – Relating to the ear

Hotbed – Any place that fosters rapid growth or development

With up to four people drumming, they provide an exciting visual and aural display of high energy rhythms, flailing arms, and flying sparks (from the power tools). The precise, percussive sound of Savage Aural Hotbed is inspired by Japanese Taiko drumming, and the cutting-edge (sometimes literally, they use saws and grinders on stage) innovation of Industrial. Other influences include diverse styles such as modern minimalist, and many ethnic styles. Their web site is <http://www.savageauralhotbed.com/>

- **STOMP** is an ensemble that has built an international reputation around the idea that everyday objects – including the human body – have music making potential. In addition to the touring company, there are many DVDs and web videos feature the group. Their website is <http://www.stomponline.com/>
- **FindSounds.com** is a free site where you can find a wide variety of sounds to use in your own found sound music. <http://www.findsounds.com/>
- **Bash the Trash** is a site with a really great section on the *Science of Sound*. There is a basic version and a detailed version. [http://web.mac.com/bashthetrash/Instruments\\_Intro/Instruments.html](http://web.mac.com/bashthetrash/Instruments_Intro/Instruments.html)
- Watch an incredible video, "Music from a Tree," at the **Found Sound Blog**. Also includes Music from Sand and Synthesizer, and the Vegetable Orchestra. <http://foundmusic.blogspot.com/>.

