

COLLABORATION: WRIGHT & NIEDECKEN

GRADE: Middle School, High School

TIME: OPEN

Participants will be challenged to think critically about how and where design principles can be applied as they explore furniture as works of art. In this activity, participants will investigate the collaborative designs of George Mann Niedecken and Frank Lloyd Wright, and work with partners to design furniture for a room in the iconic Frederick C. Robie House. Designs will be created digitally using SketchUp or Tinkercad.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Art & Science

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

SketchUp (available free online at:
<https://www.sketchup.com/>)

Tinkercad (available free online at:
<https://www.tinkercad.com>)

Computers
Sketchbooks
Pencils

1. Build skills drafting with new technology and explore how it impacts design.
2. Problem solve to learn new skills, create a work of art, and to work collaboratively.
3. Understand and experience the process of designing collaboratively.
4. Apply design elements such as color, line, and shape to make a piece of furniture that fits into its environment and creates a cohesive work of art.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between the furniture at the Robie House and the space that it is in?
2. Why might one artist collaborate with another artist?
3. Is furniture art?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright by looking at his designs, including the Robie House. (<https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/frank-lloyd-wright/>) Ask: What do you see? What does your eye notice first? Why?
- Share designs of the furniture that was created specifically for the Robie House. Images are available at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>
- Ask: What do you see? Is this the same thing you noticed when first looking at the house? Why do you think it is designed this way? How does it impact the space it is in? Is it furniture or another characteristic of the room?
- Discuss Wright's concept of Organic Architecture (<https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/organic-design/>) and how the furniture designs reflect this concept. Have participants reflect on furniture in their own homes or school.

ENGAGE

- Introduce George Mann Niedecken and collaborative partnerships.
- Have participants consider what it means to collaborate, what is involved in collaboration, and what skills are required.

DESIGN

- In pairs, have participants design a piece of furniture for a specific room at the Robie House. Initially, designs may be hand drawn, but finished works should be drafted digitally with SketchUp or Tinkercad.
- Encourage students to revise and develop their work collaboratively.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Have participants display and share their designs with the other groups.
- As participants view the collaborative works have them reflect on and/or discuss: How did each pair solve the design problem? Are there repeating elements or themes? How did working collaboratively impact the designs? How did drafting the designs digitally impact the designs?