

LOOK CLOSELY

Betye Saar, *The Fragility of Illusion*, 1981, scarf collage. © Betye Saar. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, California. The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens.



Betye Saar created this artwork, *The Fragility of Illusion* (1981), by collecting objects. She collects clippings from books, old magazines, and materials from her family to make her art. This artwork is an example of assemblage. Assemblage is a form of art made of everyday found objects, arranged in ways that suggest new meanings.

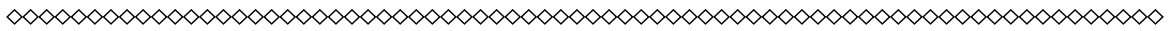
WHAT DO YOU SEE?

What colors and shapes can you find? Can you find a fish? Can you find tiny spoons and knives? Can you find a magician? How many squares can you find? What more do you see? What do you think this artwork would feel like if you could touch it?

RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 4 AND UP

The Fragility of Illusion is made from a piece of fabric: it's a handkerchief from Saar's great-aunt Hattie. A handkerchief is a piece of fabric that you can keep in your pocket and use like a tissue. For Saar, handkerchiefs represent the women in her family. In her words, they represent "a lot of things about crying, about weeping" because many of the men in her family passed away. Making art with materials she found in Hattie's trunk allowed Saar to create art pieces connected to her family history.

If you were making an artwork connected to your own family, what objects would you gather together to make your art? Why?



INSTRUCTIONS:

Go for a collections walk inside or outside (with an adult) and gather materials that you like. These could be objects found around your home or wherever you are that remind you of your family. You can cut up old magazines or newspapers and look for leaves, flowers, buttons, or other objects. Ask an adult first before you use your scissors to cut material to make art.

Create your own background from the box lid.

Use the paper pieces in this box to create a background. If you need help with scissors, ask an adult to help you cut the paper. Arrange your paper cutouts and the other objects you've found in your box.

Think about your artwork before you glue it down. What objects look good to you when they are beside each other? Or on top of one another? Or upside down? In the center of the box? Or in the corner of the box? Take some time to move objects around in your box and see what you like best. If you don't want to glue them down, you can keep your objects in this box and rearrange them later to make a completely different creation. You can also use the crayons included in this box to color and draw on the box just the way you like it.

Show and tell. Give your artwork a name and show it to your family and friends. Tell them about the choices you made as an artist to create your box, and what it means to you.

Supplies provided:

scissors, glue, paper, crayons

Supplies not provided:

box with a lid, objects, leaves, or magazine clippings from home that you like