

OpenStudio

A collection of art-making ideas by artists

Robert Gober's What Is That?: Sculpting everyday objects

In this project students create sculptures based on everyday objects.

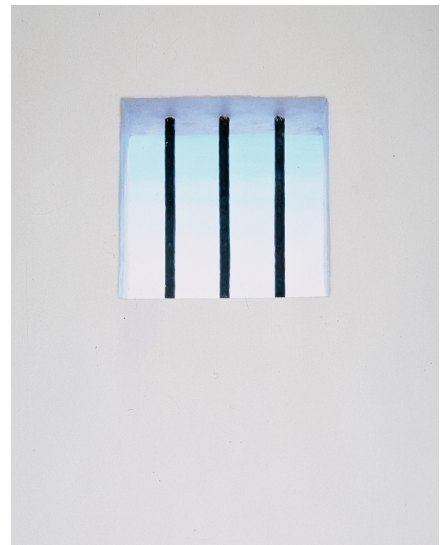
Assignment

I tend to make sculptures based on the things around me, like my own body, or common objects like sinks or boxes of tissues. My sculptures change the materials and the scale of these things, emphasizing certain features or distorting others. Those adjustments also change their meaning.

Consider an object that has meaning or resonance for you, either at home or here, on your person: your shoes, your bookbag, your cellphone.

Now imagine that you are going to make a sculpture of that object. What materials would you use? What features would you keep, and what would you change? What scale will the sculpted object be? How does each of these changes affect the sculpture you are making? How does the finished artwork relate to the object that you started with? Which is more special to you or to other people? How does the object change as it is filtered through you? If you were a different person, how might you have made the sculpture differently?

Make a model of your sculpture out of anything—cardboard, paper, fabric, tape, inexpensive things that you may have around you. Share it with the class and explain your answers to the questions above.



Robert Gober, *Prison Window*, 1992; Plywood, forged iron, plaster, latex paint and lights; Photo: Geoffrey Clements, Courtesy of the artist

Media:
Sculpture

Materials:
+ Everyday objects

+ Optional: cardboard,
fabric, paper, tape

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Artist Biography: Robert Gober

Born in 1954 in Wallingford, Connecticut
Currently lives and works in New York

Gober moved to New York in 1976, after studying English literature and art at Middlebury College in Vermont. He began showing his work regularly in 1984, and began curating exhibitions in 1986. He has had numerous one-person exhibitions nationally and internationally, notably at the Dia Center for the Arts, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Schaulager, Basel. In 2001 he represented the United States at the Venice Biennale. Gober's curatorial projects have been shown at Cable Gallery, New York; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; The Menil Collection, Houston; Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Photo: Catherine Opie, ©
Catherine Opie