

## Carlos Amoraes: Discarded Spider Hybrid Creature Collage

Created by Elizabeth Rossi, Valley View Middle School Art Teacher

**Post-Visit Lesson Plan**  
**Age adaptable**  
**Visual Arts**  
**2-3 Lessons**



### **About the Artist and His Work:**

*Discarded Spider* is curated by Raphaela Platow and organized by the Contemporary Arts Center.

Carlos Amoraes is a Mexican artist who works in many different mediums that include performance, animation, drawing, painting, and sculpture. In one of his early works, he created a performance that focused on the theme of *luche libre* (Mexican masked wrestling). The wrestlers wore masks that represented Amoraes' face. In essence, they were transforming themselves through wearing a mask. This theme of transformation through masks, costume, and bodily alterations is common throughout his work.

Amoraes' exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center, *Discarded Spider*, exhibits his most recent work. Many of the artworks in this exhibition have images in them that are part of a visual database. Amoraes refers to this database as the "Liquid Archive." For over ten years, he has collected images from books, magazines, the internet and his own photographs of the urban environment of Mexico City. He uses a process known as rotoscopy to trace over these found and created images to produce silhouettes and line drawings. Over the years he has added to his archive, much like we add new words to our vocabulary. Now he has over 1,500 digital drawings. The images in his archive include line drawings of animals, birds, machines, geometric patterns, and people. Amoraes' objects morph together to create unexpected hybrids that are both beautiful and horrific. The use of these images might relate to his childhood when he was attracted to fantasy and monster tales in which of transformation is common.

### **Objectives (Correlating with National Standards):**

- Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas
- Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work
- Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks



CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

**Materials:**

Magazines  
12x18 black construction paper  
Various shades of 12x18 construction paper  
Glue  
Scissors

**Vocabulary:**

Hybrid  
Metamorphosis  
Archive  
Collage

**Anticipatory Set:**

Ask students to describe a past dream or nightmare they had or a creature from a scary story. What did the dream or creature look like? What images come to mind? Discuss the idea behind Amorales' work, and the concept of metamorphosis / a hybrid creature. Students will turn to their imagination, a past nightmare or a dream to draw inspiration for a hybrid creature they will create!

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce project with initial discussion activity. Then show work by Carlos Amorales. (*Particularly the work from Discarded Spider, on display through March 8, 2009 at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center.*)
2. Review project guideline sheet with students. (This is included at the end of the document.)
3. Emphasize that adding strips of construction paper to their composition is optional. However, it will add an interesting architectural element to their piece, and adding visual balance and another dynamic quality to their artwork.
3. Distribute supplies and allow students to begin working.

**Wrap-Up:**

Have the class display their artwork and ask the following questions:

- Were you trying to convey emotion through your compositional choices?
- If you added strips of construction paper how is your creature interacting with that architectural element?
- Why did you select *those* images from your archive? What meaning do they bring to your creature?
- Is your creature doing something?
- Does your creature tell a story or a message to his/her viewer?

**Assessment:**

Use the rubric included at the end of this document to assess the students work.

**Interdisciplinary Lesson Ideas:**

Language Arts

Students write a descriptive short story about their hybrid creature. They should describe their creature as if it were real.

- What does it look like?
- What does it feel like? (Soft fur, sharp spikes, etc.)
- Where is it from?
- How does it walk, crawl, etc?
- Does their creature have a story to tell? Tell that story!

**National Standards:**

Content Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Content Standard 2: Using knowledge of structures and functions

Content Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

## Hybrid Creature Collage Handout

For this project you will create an artwork inspired by Mexican artist, Carlos Amorales. For more than ten years, Carlos Amorales has collected images from books, magazines, the Internet and, most importantly, his own photographs of the urban environment surrounding his Mexico City home and studio<sup>1</sup>. This *Liquid Archive*, as he has termed it, serves as the basis for much of his artwork. In his exhibit, *Discarded Spider*, Amorales uses these images to create hybrid creatures composed of differing parts. For example, Amorales uses animal and human characteristics in order to create one, often times horrifying creature.

Today you will develop your own *Liquid Archive*, by cutting out images that you find to be visually or emotionally stimulating, from contemporary magazines. Once you have collected several images, reassemble them to create a hybrid creature that has a message all its own.

Before you begin consider this:

*Select several magazines to cut up images from. Select images that evoke strong feelings from you. Possible subjects for your creature may be: family, friends, dreams, happiness, fear, anxiety, and confusion.*

*Hint: You can change scale of objects and fragment images. This enhances the fantasy feeling.*

### **Step 1 – Collect images for your figure:**

Look for images that are expressive or have a mysterious quality to them! Combine human, animal, and/or mechanical parts to create a hybrid figure. Remove the magazine page, and cut images out.

### **Step 2 (Optional) – Architectural element:**

Cut 2-5 one-inch strips of colored construction paper. They must be the same color. Add strips to create a balanced composition and glue to black paper. Ask yourself this: How is my creature interacting with these strips of paper? Are the strips supporting my creature? Is my creature suspended from them or leaning against them? Or are they simply there to add visual balance?

### **Step 3 –Assemble creature:**

Remember, your creature should be the focal point of your composition. Begin to arrange the images that you have cut out. Decide where interesting transitions can occur from human to animal, animal to mechanical object, etc. Transition areas are head/neck, neck/torso, arms/hands, torso/legs, and legs/feet. The transition between parts should be smooth. Consider incorporating letters and words! Glue to black paper.

### **Step 4- Background:**

Select images for background. They should enhance your creatures message or story! Although you are not morphing these images they should add to your message / story. Glue to black paper.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/amorales/>

# Hybrid Creature Collage Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Creating Surreal Figures Project Assessment Form

Complete the following assessment rubric to grade your project.

S = Student Grade T = Teacher Grade	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
Score	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5
The artist has combined animal, mechanical, and/or human parts to create a surreal figure, and it is the focal point of the composition.										
The artist has created areas of smooth transition between parts of the body.										
The artist has selected images for the background that enhance the surrealist quality of their artwork.										
The artist has created an architectural element using 2-5 strips of colored construction paper. The strips used are all the same color										
The artist has used their time wisely in class and displayed excellence in craftsmanship.										

TOTAL / 50 POINTS

**SCORE EQUIVALENTS:**

- 1 = No effort / attempt
- 2 = Poor effort
- 3 = Average effort
- 4 = Above average effort
- 5 = Excellent effort