



Museum of 21st Century Design (M21D)  
www.m21d.org

## Activity: Imagining the Future with Objects

The image shows two activity sheets side-by-side. The left sheet is yellow and titled 'Object:'. It has a red vertical bar on the left edge. It contains a 'draw the object here:' box and several text prompts: 'your name:', 'location:', 'today's date:', 'what does the object look like?' (with sub-prompts for form, material, and color), 'how is it made?', 'does this object have positive or negative effects on the world?', and 'how is this object used?'. The right sheet is cyan and titled 'Change the object!'. It has a pink vertical bar on the left edge. It contains a 'draw the object here:' box and prompts: 'Imagine your object 100 years in the future. Would it be made from a different material? Could it have a more positive effect on the world? Could the purpose of the object be different?', 'how is it made?', 'what material is it made of?', and 'how would you use it?'. Both sheets have a small 'M21D' logo at the bottom right.

### Introduction:

This is an activity for all ages and is about imaging how objects might be made and used in the far future: 100 years from now. Participants are invited to think about how our behavior and expectations about design will be different in the future. This can be done in the museum, classroom, or anywhere with access to a table, objects, and colored pencils or markers.

### Instructions:

Print the coloured labels, using both sides of the paper, in size A5 (5.83 x 8.27"). If using 8.5 x 11" paper instead, that is OK, you can cut off the excess unprinted area for recycling or another activity.

Each participant receives at least one page and uses both sides of it.

Ask participants to select an object they have seen in the museum collection, or something from their memory, home, or workplace. It helps to have a display of objects nearby or a presentation of images of objects from the collection. Art objects can work, but design objects tend to work better: they have a use function, and are more familiar.

For **Side 1** of the label, participants draw the object and describe how it looks, how it is made, and how it works. Invite them to be creative, critical, or surprising with it. People have selected chairs, phones, architecture, cars, computers; but we have seen students, parents, and kids select things to draw such as:

The elevator they rode to the gallery  
One of their parents  
A credit card  
Headphones  
Humanoid robots  
An umbrella  
A chocolate bar

To help participants respond to the questions and describe their object, you can prompt them with questions to get them thinking. Some examples that have proven handy in workshops include:

*Does the object become garbage after it is used? Can it be recycled?*

*Does the object need to be shipped a long way? Do you think it is difficult to make or require a lot of work?*

*Is the object something that is helpful to people? Is it available to all who need it?*

Once they complete the first side, ask them to flip over the page to **Side 2** and describe a new, replacement object in the future, 100 years from now. Here are some prompts to help their thinking about this exercise, that have worked with kids of all ages:

*Is there a better, future version of this thing you can imagine?*

*Does this object even exist in the future? Is it needed or wanted by people in 100 years?*

*Do you think people might look back on our objects today and be shocked by us?*

As food for thought, you can remind participants of practices and objects from 100+ years ago from today that can seem strange to us. For example:



- Leeches used as a medical procedure to remove blood
- Having the choice of only one automobile
- Silent films
- Outhouses
- Legal child labor
- Stationary phones
- Cigarettes endorsed by doctors



Object: Dryer (Now)

location: Rotterdam, former Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
date: 15-7-2023

what does the object look like?

> form square  
> material metal +  
> colour white

how is it made?

by machine

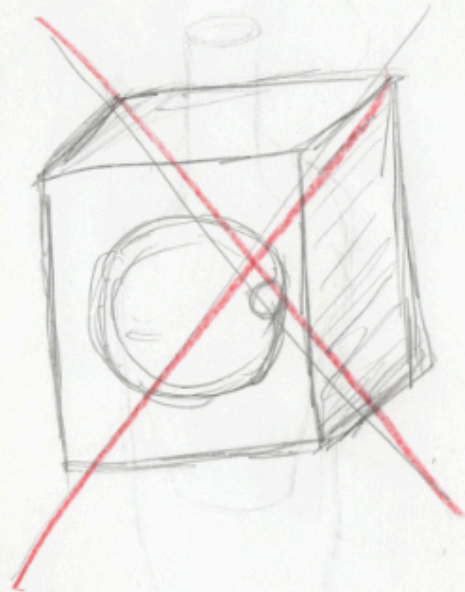
what do you think of the sustainability of the material?

Not, it needs so much energy to dry clothes

how would you use it?

plug it with electricity

draw the object here:



## Change the object!

location: Rotterdam, former Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
date: 15-7-2023

How would you change this object, so it will suit the future world? Would you use a different kind of material? Could you make the object more sustainable?

Does the object need an other purpose?

how is it made?

recycled clothes

what material is it made of?

Recycled old clothes

how would you use it?

draw your selfmade object here:

No Dryer

No need to have a dryer anymore.

The clothes will be made by the material

Self-cleaned.

## Object:

vindplaats: Rotterdam, voormalig Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
datum: 9-8-2023

hoe ziet hier object eruit?

- > vorm SLANGACHTIG/BUIJVORMIG
- > materiaal KOPER/LEGERING/METAAL
- > kleur GEELACHTIG

hoe is het gemaakt?

GESMOLTEN/GEGOTEN/GEBOGEN

wat denk jij van de duurzaamheid van het materiaal?

NIET ECHT DUURZAAM, KOPER WORDT  
GEDOLVEN MET ALLE VERVUILING  
VAN DIEN.

wat zou je hiermee kunnen doen als je niet weet wat het is?

MUZIEKINSTRUMENT

teken hier het object na:



## Change the object!

vindplaats: Rotterdam, voormalig Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
datum: 9-08-2108

Hoe zou je dit object kunnen veranderen zodat het past in de toekomstige wereld? Zou je ander materiaal gebruiken? Kun je het voorwerp duurzamer maken of energie neutraal? Of heeft het object een nieuwe functie nodig?

hoe is het gemaakt?

MET DE HAND GEVORMD IN EEN MAL.  
BAMBOE FRAME GEVORMD DOOR HITTE

van welk materiaal is het gemaakt?

ZEEWIER, BAMBOE

hoe kun je dit object gebruiken?

JE KAN HET OP JE SCHOUDE ZETTEN ALS  
HET REGENT. HET IS EEN WATERRESERVOIR  
MET EEN KRAAN. TEVEN<sup>s</sup> PARAPLU  
VOOR WANDELINGEN IN DE NATUUR. (MOBIEL)

teken hier je zelfbedachte object:

NAAM: DRUPPEL (DROP)  
**VOOR REGEN EN DORST**



# Object: My Dad (Horst)

location: Rotterdam, former Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
date: 17-07 2023

what does the object look like?

- > form 1,80 cm; sporty but "in die Gänge gekommen"
- > material Hydrogen, Carbon, Nitrogen, Oxygen, mostly skin & bones
- > colour white with freckles, cotton, leather (skin) also

how is it made?

when a man & a woman love each other very much they do some gymnastics & after 9 months he was born (57 years ago)

what do you think of the sustainability of the material?

I think it is the most sustainable - all carbon!

When it dies you can turn it to ash & use it to fertilize plants. The glasses it is wearing are out of plastic - not so sustainable

how would you use it?

mostly for advice, insightful fun talks, facts about the world - better than a dictionary!

Also cuddles & hugs (and it also makes money so sometimes it man about you things)

draw the object here:



# Change the object!

location: Rotterdam, former Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
date: 12-07-2108

How would you change this object, so it will suit the future world? Would you use a different kind of material? Could you make the object more sustainable? Does the object need an other purpose?

how is it made?

He says: Ash → Fertilizer

I say: hopefully something reusable, metal for solar & battery & computer chips

with a lot of scientific innovation & wind energy (this thing is life size)

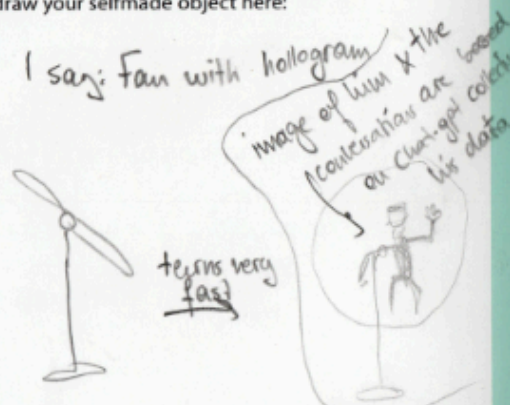
He says: You burn it

how would you use it?

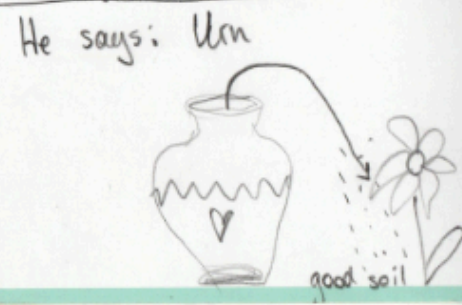
same as before!

or fertilizer & grow a tree for memory

draw your selfmade object here:



↳ you can put it in a field



Object: Pistool

vindplaats: Rotterdam, Voormalig Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
datum: 12-07-2023

hoe ziet hier object eruit?  
> vorm letter L op zijn kant.  
> materiaal Staal en Plastic  
> kleur zwart

hoe is het gemaakt?  
Staal omgesmolten in mallen

wat denk jij van de duurzaamheid van het materiaal?  
Niet duurzaam, niet nodig.  
Gevaarlijk. Veel uitstoot door  
verbrandings oven

hoe kun je dit object gebruiken?  
"Zelfverdediging" Mensen  
doormiddel van kogels uitschakelen

teken hier het object na: Elvie



## Change the object!

vindplaats: Rotterdam, Voormalig Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen  
datum: 12-07-2108

Hoe zou je dit object kunnen veranderen zodat het past in de toekomstige wereld?  
Zou je ander materiaal gebruiken? Kun je het voorwerp duurzamer maken? Of heeft het misschien een nieuwe functie nodig?

hoe is het gemaakt?  
Mech verontreinigende machines

van welk materiaal is het gemaakt?  
Staal en Wier een soort plastic

hoe kun je dit object gebruiken?  
Ze zeggen om mensen uit te  
schakelen. heel apart. Waarom  
zou je dat willen.

teken hier je zelfbedachte nieuwe object:

