

ART ACTIVITY

*Exercise and Functional Fashion***Background**

Industrialized clothing manufacturing during the second half of the 20th century paved the way for new department stores. In New York, Macy's, Lord & Taylor, Brooks Brothers, and other specialty clothing stores opened on what was known as Ladies' Mile, an upscale shopping district that occupied Broadway and Sixth Avenue between 14th and 23rd Streets. This new urban space helped change the way women lived within the city. Before 1850, it was unusual to see a respectable woman out in public without a male companion. New shopping districts offered places for independent leisure and refreshment. Affluent women could socialize unchaperoned, and working-class women could find white-collar jobs as sales clerks and buyers. At the same time, city parks across the country provided recreational space for women to enjoy independently and where they could engage in physical activities including ice skating and bicycling.

Task

Students will embody the role of creative designer for a 19th century department store on Ladies' Mile. Their job is to market one of three new recreational outfits worn by the modern woman (a cycling suit, a golf ensemble, or a gym suit) by constructing a three-dimensional window display that exhibits the unique characteristics of their chosen outfit and how it represents the changing societal roles of women.

Materials

- Window display reference images
- Shoe boxes or something comparable
- Photocopies of recreational outfits in *Exercise and Functional Fashion* resource
- Cardstock or cardboard
- Scissors
- Elmer's glue or glue sticks
- Multi-color construction paper

- Colored pencils or markers
- *Optional:* Mixed-media supplies (sequins, string, pipe cleaners, feathers, fabric, buttons, etc.)

Art Vocabulary

- **composition:** The arrangement of the elements of art in a work of art.
- **creative designer:** A person who works in the area of marketing and advertising to create materials that provide information about a company's products or offerings.
- **focal point:** The area of an artwork that attracts the viewer's attention.
- **theme:** A unifying or dominant idea.
- **unity:** A principle of design that refers to the sense of wholeness in a work of art.

Steps

- Begin by gathering images of successful window displays found on the internet. These will give students a foundation in design before they create their own display.
- Distribute or display image(s) on the board. Then, invite students to look closely and answer the following questions:
 - What do you notice?
 - What product is being advertised?
 - What makes this an effective window display? (There is a **focal point** that draws your attention; there is a sense of **unity** between all elements in the window; there is an overarching **theme** that helps tell a story)
- If you were to design a window display, what must you consider? (audience, placement of objects, lighting, theme, colors)
- Invite students to imagine they have been hired as creative designers for a 19th century department store on Ladies' Mile and are asked to create a window display to market a new recreational outfit to women. The window display should highlight the outfit's purpose and unique features.
- Students will select one of the three outfits presented in the *Exercise and Functional Fashion* resource for which to create their window display. Before art-making, provide students an opportunity to analyze the outfits and sketch initial designs.

- What observations can you make about the outfit you selected?
 - What do you notice about its design and intended function?
 - Why might it be created this way?
 - How is it different from women's fashion from earlier eras?
 - What does it tell you about societal views of women at this time?
 - How will you demonstrate this in your window display?
 - What will be your focal point?
 - What engaging imagery will you use?
- Once students have finished brainstorming, provide them with art-making material to construct the final displays. These will be miniature in size. Similar to dioramas, they should use a shoe box or comparable material as the window. Mixed-media supplies, drawing tools, images of the outfits, and scrap cardboard can be used to build out the display.
 - Conclude the project with a written artist statement using the following prompt – *Imagine you are about to unveil your window display to the store employees and customers. Write a speech that describes how the outfit you selected reflects women's changing roles at the turn of the 20th century and explains how your window display and why the design choices you made are an effective way to market this garment.*

Window Display Tips

Window displays are designed to highlight a specific product and entice the viewer to shop within the store. An effective window display: tells a story; creates a focal point; is balanced and uncluttered; is visually engaging using bold colors, shapes, or imagery; uses strategic lighting.

To build in three-dimensions, students can use cardboard or cardstock paper as construction material. Three simple techniques to create depth include accordion folds, triangle mounts, and rolled tubes.

