

Lois Ehlert
The Art of Illustration

Art Appreciation Slides
Spring 2018

Slide 1: Art Around Us

- **Where do we see art?**
 - Museums and art galleries
 - Homes
 - Sculpture gardens
 - Public spaces (murals)
 - Advertisements
 - Chatsworth school hallways

Slide 2: Book Illustrations

- **How about art you might encounter everyday without thinking of it as art?**
- **What do you see here?**
- **What do you call pictures in books?**

We find art in books, particularly children's books. Illustrators are artists. Every time that you pick up a picture book, you are looking at pictures or "illustrations" created by artists.

- **Do you have any favorite picture books that contain art you like?**
- **What type of art do you find in these books? Can you describe it?**
 - Paintings in watercolors, oils, pastels
 - Sketches
 - Photography
 - Comics and cartoons
 - Graphic novels
 - Computer generated images
 - Collage

Slide 3: Lois Ehlert

Let's look at a famous children's book illustrator who you may know.

- **Has anyone heard of Lois Ehlert? Do you recognize any books/illustrations?** (note *Fish Eyes* in slide and show books/mention some book titles)
- **Where is the artist sitting and what strikes you about the space?**
- **Do you have a special place at home where you do art?**

This is Ms. Lois Ehlert. She is an American artist who was born 84 years ago in the state of Wisconsin. Ms. Ehlert's mother was a seamstress who taught her how to sew at age 8. Her father had a wood shop. Ms. Ehlert says that she lived in a house where ***"everyone seemed to be making something"***.

In her family, no one ever threw anything out that could be used for an art project. Her parents had lived during the Great Depression when reusing was a necessity so she reused materials to create works of art. Both parents shared their materials with her and allowed her to create works of art with the leftover materials from their work.

- **What kinds of things would a seamstress have? How about a woodworker?**
-fabric scraps, lace, strings, buttons, wood scraps, nails, brushes

Her parents allowed her to keep a table of materials in a corner of the house so that whenever she had an idea, she could go and create it without searching around for supplies. She continues to make art with objects people might otherwise throw away.

Slide 4: Materials

Ms. Ehlert went to art school but even as an adult illustrator, she continued to create art out of found materials like she did as a child and still creates art on the same table she used as a child. *“I used what’s close at hand, just as I did when I was growing up.”*

- **Does anyone recognize these illustrations?**
- **What materials do you see?**
- **How are the materials used in the picture?**
 - Some natural materials like corn, strawberries, branches, cinnamon sticks
 - Some manmade objects like buttons, bottle caps, wrappers

Slide 5: Collage

- Does anyone recognize these books?
- Looking at the covers, what type of art do you think she is famous for?
- What is collage?
- What materials is Ms. Ehlert using to create these pictures?
- Have you ever made a collage? What materials did you use?

Lois Ehlert is famous for her use of collage - assembling together various materials/found objects to create a work of art. With collage, one can also combine real objects with painted ones and use tools to create texture; like splattering paint with a toothbrush.

Leaf Man- materials from nature. Ms. Ehlert once said that 'mother nature gives me free art supplies'

Rrralph- scrap materials like those she may have found in her mother's sewing kit or her father's woodworking area.

Rain Fish- orange peels, feathers, beads, shells, crumpled paper

Slide 6: Creating a Book

- **Have you ever picked a book based on the pictures?**
- **Have you ever ‘read’ a book that is all pictures?**
- **How do you create a book?**
 - Do you write a story and then draw the pictures?
 - Or start with the pictures and then develop the story?

As a child, Ms. Ehlert loved to read. She and her siblings went to the library every week and at one point, she had read all of the children’s books in the entire library! Even as a child, Ms. Ehlert she knew that one day she wanted to create a children’s book. Ms. Ehlert picked out the books she wanted to read based on their pictures rather than the story.

In some cases, illustrators are asked to create the artwork for a book after the narrative has been written. In others, the art drives the story. And in others, the art *IS* the story.

Ms. Ehlert started by creating lots of art and over time, she incorporated her artwork into children’s books. As she said- ***‘Everyone needs time to develop their dreams. An egg in the nest doesn’t become a bird overnight.’***

This picture shows how she also writes a story and then creates the pictures to support the story.

Slide 7: Inspirations

- **Where do you think Ms. Ehlert got the inspiration for many of her books?**
- **Have you ever noticed something and been inspired to make a picture or story of it?**
- **If you were to create a book, what would it be about?**

Nature- As she works in her garden, buys fruit at the market or visits the aquarium, she is inspired by the plants and animals she sees

On a trip to the aquarium, she said- ***"I keep my eyes open. An idea may be close by"***. She describes sketching and writing words before her idea floats away. She uses these words to develop her pictures and story.

Found materials- she creates art based on the materials she finds around her; much like the woodworking and sewing materials her parents left for her as a child.

Shapes- Ms. Ehlert sees how different shapes can come together to create an image.

Colors – Ms. Ehlert's books are filled with colors – she prefers bold/bright colors to pale colors.