



Photo by Tobin Mollett

## The Artist: David Mollett

David Mollett is an Alaska painter well known for landscapes and colorful perspective collages. He began painting around Fairbanks and then moved to the dramatic scenery of Denali Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Later he turned to "paintless paintings" using found plastic arranged according to color and pattern.

Mollett travels to museums all over the world, and is especially drawn to twentieth-century French artists like Matisse and Derain, but his ideas for art come from many sources. He starts with a sketch, and the art evolves over time. Mollett creates art as a way of experiencing the world. He says, "It is my way of seeing. When I paint, I can see more clearly. I create primarily for my own reasons but I enjoy it when others appreciate my work. When I exhibit my art, I get to see it through other people's eyes."

As a landscape painter Mollett creates strong delineated forms with bright colors. His landscapes, completed in the field, are painted in quick-drying alkyd paints. He enjoys painting huge Alaska vistas and likes to deal with water and changing skies.



Photo by David Mollett

Tanana Vista • 30x40" • oil on canvas • Private collection

David Mollett was born in 1950 in Portland, Oregon. He studied at the New York Studio School and completed his BA in Art at Reed College in Portland. He has had solo shows in most public exhibition spaces throughout Alaska and has been featured in group exhibitions across the United States and Europe. He lives and works in Fairbanks. When asked about being an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Alaska, Mollett said, "It is gratifying to ease the way for new artists by giving something back, by sharing the things you've learned."

## The Artwork: *Collection Cabinet*

60 x 48 x 3 inches • 2005 • found plastic, wood, metal, rivets, glue • Alaska State Museum Collection

*Collection Cabinet* by David Mollett begins with common everyday objects and then reshapes them in such a way as to make them almost unrecognizable. He combines colors, shapes and textures in new and exciting ways that make us think differently about what we use and discard in our daily lives.

*Collection Cabinet* is a low-relief collage (about 3 inches deep) that portrays an illusion of space, organized by linear perspective and made entirely from found objects. Mollett was attracted to the bright colors of used and broken plastic at the recycling center in Fairbanks. He decided to collect, clean and recycle plastic into pictures that use no paint for their color. Mollett experimented initially with small collages (8x10 inches) and now creates them up to 60x90 inches. It takes a tremendous amount of raw material to build enough colors and shapes for one of these works. The hardest colors to find are brown, dark green and purple. The plastic pieces are cut and sawn, then attached to sheet metal using glue and rivets. Artworks like *Collection Cabinet* can take as long as a year to finish.

There are three collages of this style in collections at the Alaska State Museum, Anchorage Museum, and University of Alaska Museum of the North. When asked why the Alaska State Museum collected this artwork, Steve Henrikson, Curator of Collections, said, "We selected this piece because of the uniqueness of concept and the fineness with which the concept was executed. The artist is known for his landscape paintings but started down a new path using a palette of salvaged plastics, sorted by hue and assembled. We had never seen anything like it, felt that it was very skillfully created and that it would be very engaging when put on display in the museum. When we exhibited it, we found that museum visitors were indeed drawn to it. We were able to acquire this piece through a grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, which supports art acquisitions by museums all across the state."

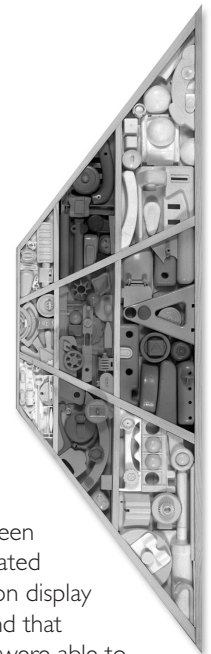


Photo by Ron Klein

See more artwork by David Mollett

Artists of the Arctic Refuge: [www.arcticrefugeart.org/mollett.html](http://www.arcticrefugeart.org/mollett.html)

Well Street Art Gallery: [www.wellstreetart.com](http://www.wellstreetart.com)

Bowery Gallery: [www.bowerygallery.org](http://www.bowerygallery.org)

Additional reference materials

Learn about artists Henri Matisse, Andre Derain: [www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)



## Responding to Artwork

Standing in front of a painting or sculpture by a master can take your breath away. Seeing “real art” is one of the great visual highlights in life – and one that we don’t often have the opportunity to experience. Closely viewing a reproduction is different than seeing the real thing but is a creative, useful teaching tool.

Stimulate student discussion and understanding by asking questions about the image **Collection Cabinet**. Encourage students to express as many different ideas as they can. Record their ideas. See if students generate new ideas or change their opinions after learning more about the artist David Mollett and his work. (See Artist and Artwork section for details.)

- Describe what you like about this image.
- Who is the artist? (David Mollett)
- Compare the size of this painting to something familiar. (60 x 48 x 3 inches)
- When was it made? (2005)
- What is it made of? (found plastic, wood, metal, rivets, glue)
- Where is the real artwork? (Alaska State Museum, Juneau, Alaska)
- Why does a museum collect artwork?

### Describe

Ask students questions that allow them to describe the things they see in the picture. Encourage responses based on what one actually sees, rather than what one feels. If you can point to it you can see it. (Elements of Art: color, shape, line, texture, pattern)

- ▲ What do you see?
- ▲ Name the colors you see. Which colors do you notice first? Second? Last?
- ▲ Describe the shapes. Are they geometric, organic, natural?
- ▲ Describe the kinds of lines you see.
- ▲ If you were to touch the artwork, what would it feel like?

### Analyze

Discuss how the artist arranged the elements of art to give the artwork meaning and expression. (Principles of Art: emphasis, balance, unity, variety, rhythm/movement)

- ▲ What catches your eye when you first look at the artwork?
- ▲ What are the dominant elements in the composition?
- ▲ Do some areas look heavier? Lighter? Is the artwork symmetrical or asymmetrical?
- ▲ What seems like the most important part of the artwork?
- ▲ How does your eye move through this picture?
- ▲ Where are you, the viewer, standing in relationship to this scene?

### Interpret & Judge

We all bring different background knowledge and experiences to the works of art we view. This helps to inform our judgments and allows us to form ideas of taste about what we like and don’t like. It helps us understand individual works of art and how we view art in general.

- What things are different and make this an interesting picture? Which shapes are most interesting to you?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say? What questions do you have about the artist?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- What other things does this artwork remind you of?
- Is there anything you wonder about when you look at this image?
- Would you hang this work in your house?
- Do you know someone who might like this work of art?

# Activities

## COLOR

**Color Families:** Paint or color different pictures using (1) only primary colors, (2) only secondary colors, and (3) only black, white, and grey. Compare how each picture looks in terms of feeling, value, and intensity.

**One Point Perspective:** Put a dot near the center of a sheet of white paper. Draw four diagonal lines from the dot to each of the four corners. Using horizontal and vertical lines connect the diagonal lines to create rectangular spaces and the illusion of a tunnel. Fill in those spaces with different colors.

## COLLAGE

**Paper Collage:** Gather colored papers (use magazines, scrap and art papers). Sort them by color (for example, the blues) and arrange from lightest to darkest. Cut or rip the papers into shapes. Arrange the pieces into a collage that shows perspective with darker colors and larger pieces in foreground, lighter colors and smaller pieces in the background.

**Found Object Collage:** Collect different kinds and shapes of small plastic – broken bits are ideal. Sort by color. Arrange the plastics into shapes to create an interesting design on heavy cardboard. Experiment by rearranging the colors. How does shape (large to small) and color (light and bright to dark and dull) change the feeling of the artwork? Choose a favorite design and securely glue the plastics on the cardboard.

**Box Lid Puzzle:** Collect as many small and unusually shaped objects as you can. Create a puzzle-like arrangement, fitting the objects into a box lid that has sides. The work of artist Louise Nevelson can be used as a point of comparison and discussion starter to talk about shape and form.

## Lessons Online

**African Painted Rhythms:** Students learn about warm and cool colors as they create a watercolor artwork using lines, texture and pattern inspired by South Africa.  
[www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)

**Celebrating the Art Elements:** Students look for the elements of art in the art of American Pop artist, Roy Lichtenstein. They use these elements to develop a drawing/painting/collage.  
[www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)

**Color Wizards:** Students practice mixing primary colored tempera paints to make secondary colors, tints and shades. Students complete a tempera painting. [www.akart.org](http://www.akart.org)

**Folded Lines:** Students learn about and compare two different artists, Alexander Calder and Piet Mondrian. They create their own work of art combining sculpture and painting.  
[www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)

**Landscapes with David Mollett:** Students examine landscapes by Fairbanks artist David Mollett looking at foreground, middle and backgrounds. They paint a landscape demonstrating what they have learned. [www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)

**Mouse Colors:** Students learn the primary colors and discover what happens when paints are mixed by experimenting on large paper. Reading, graphing and comparing skills are also included.  
[www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)

**Trees and Beyond:** Students examine Van Gogh landscape paintings, focusing on near and far. They learn that size and placement of trees are important to show perspective. After learning to draw basic tree forms, students create a landscape that shows perspective using markers and oil pastels.  
[www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)

## Alaska Content Standards for the Arts

[www.eed.state.ak.us/contentstandards/Arts.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/contentstandards/Arts.html)

### Standard A: Perform and create

A student should be able to create and perform in the arts.

### Standard B: Understand historical and contemporary roles

A student should be able to understand the historical and contemporary role of the arts in Alaska, the nation, and the world.

### Standard C: Critique and analyze

A student should be able to critique his/her art and the art of others.

### Standard D: Recognize beauty and meaning

A student should be able to recognize beauty and meaning through the arts in his/her life.

## Art Resources Online

- Alaska Art • [www.akart.org](http://www.akart.org)
- Alaska Arts Education Consortium • [www.akartsed.org](http://www.akartsed.org)
- Alaska State Council on the Arts • [www.eed.state.ak.us/aksca](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/aksca)
- Alaska State Museum Teacher Resources • [www.museums.state.ak.us](http://www.museums.state.ak.us)
- Alaska's Digital Archives • <http://vilda.alaska.edu/index.php>
- Alaska's Museums • [www.museumsalaska.org](http://www.museumsalaska.org)
- Museum of the North • [www.uaf.edu/museum/journeys/index.html](http://www.uaf.edu/museum/journeys/index.html)
- National Endowment for the Arts • [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov)
- Project ARTiculate • [www.projectarticulate.com](http://www.projectarticulate.com)
- Rasmuson Foundation • [www.rasmuson.org/ArtOnDisplay](http://www.rasmuson.org/ArtOnDisplay)



# Vocabulary

**Background:** Part of an artwork that appears to be farthest from the viewer, or deep in the distance.

**Foreground:** The part of an artwork that appears to be nearest the viewer, or in the front of a layered scene.

**Middle ground:** The part of an artwork that appears to lie between objects in the foreground and background.

**Collage:** A two-dimensional artwork created by arranging and gluing materials onto a flat surface.

**Landscape:** An artwork depicting outdoor scenery.

**Linear perspective:** Using line to create the illusion of depth on a two-dimensional surface by converging all horizontals at a vanishing point on the horizon.

**“Paintless” painting:** The process of creating an artwork that may appear to be a painting but made without using paint.

**Perspective:** The illusion of three-dimensional objects or scenes on a flat or nearly flat surface.

**Relief sculpture:** Three-dimensional artwork that projects from a flat surface and is seen from only one point of view.

**Space:** Refers to the area in which art is organized. Shapes and forms are defined by the empty space surrounding them (negative space) and by the space they occupy (positive space).

## Elements of Art

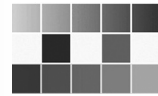
**Line** is the path of a point moving through space.



**Shape / Form.** Shape implies spatial form and is usually perceived as two-dimensional. Form has depth, length, and width and resides in space. It is perceived as three-dimensional.



**Colors** all come from the three primaries (red, yellow, blue) and black and white. They have three properties – hue, value, and intensity.

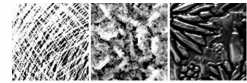


**Value** refers to relative lightness and darkness and is perceived in terms of varying levels of contrast.



**Space / Perspective.** Space refers to the area in which art is organized. Perspective is representing a volume of space or a three-dimensional object on a flat surface.

**Texture** refers to the tactile qualities of a surface (actual) or to the visual representation of such surface qualities (implied).



**Pattern** refers to the repetition or reoccurrence of a design element, exact or varied, which establishes a visual beat.



## Principles of Art

**Balance** is the impression of equilibrium in a pictorial or sculptural composition. Balance is often referred to as symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial.



**Unity** is achieved when the components of a work of art are perceived as harmonious, giving the work a sense of completion.



**Rhythm / Movement** refers to the suggestion of motion through the use of various elements.



**Proportion / Scale.** Proportion is the size relationship of parts to a whole and to one another. Scale refers to relating size to a constant, such as a human body.



**Emphasis** refers to the created center of interest, the place in an artwork where your eye first lands.

