

Assignment: What is Art?

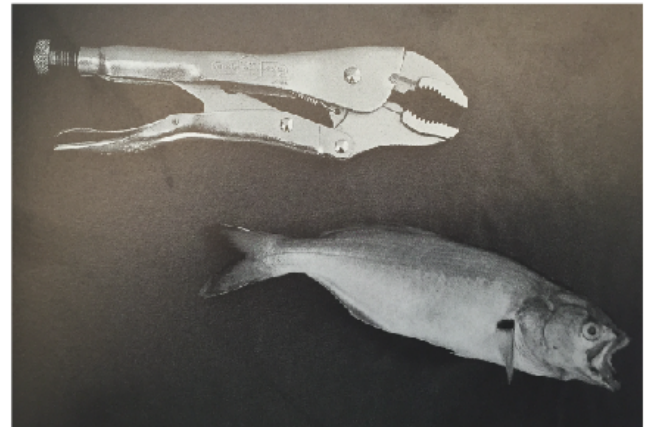
Artist: Arman

Title: School of Fishes

Date: 1982

Media: Welded steel and vise grips

Size: Approximately 64 by 96 by 3 inches



The difference between art and everyday objects:

There never used to be any question about the differences between art and life. No matter how closely art resembled an object from the real world, art was clearly separate from that object – until twentieth century artists began to challenge even this most basic difference.

A new outlook on sculpture is art made out of household tools. A particularly fine example of bringing such objects from the everyday world into an art exhibition space is Arman's *School of Fishes*. This visually complex work is essentially a relief sculpture made up of hundreds of vise grips cemented together in a tight, rectangular format and attached to a flat surface that allows the composition to be hung on a wall. Because the vise grips are mounted at slightly different angles, their silvery metal surfaces catch the light differently. This in turn gives the sculpture a complex texture and a quick visual rhythm, as though these were a school of small, shiny fish racing through a clear, shallow body of water or a fisherman's recent catch, spilled onto the ground at market. Based on traditions established by Marcel Duchamp nearly seventy years earlier, Arman works with "found" objects, transforming a humble tool into the image of a living thing! Arman's *School* has made me more visually aware than I had been before when I walk into a hardware store.

Bibliography:

Why a Painting is Like a Pizza (p 122-123)

Two Articles about *School of Fishes*



Tools as Art: Instruments of Change — The Hechinger Collection

Common tools transformed for uncommon results — that’s what Tools as Art was all about. Just consider Arman’s shimmering school of fishes, made out of welded steel vice grips, or Mark Blumenstein’s whimsical Saw Bird, with wings made out of, what else? — a saw. This exhibition, featuring more than 60 sculptures, photographs, crafts, prints, and drawings from the collection of John Hechinger, Sr., continued to delight visitors in 2003. It also served as inspiration for many family activities, where visitors were invited to create their own sculptures out of everyday tools.

Tools go from the box to the gallery Written by ALLAN I. ROSS

With a certain mindset, unlatching a toolbox or sliding open a desk drawer can be like opening a toy box. If you think tools are things to play with, the Kresge Art Museum has a show for you. “This is the most fun show we’ve had in a while,” says Kresge curator April Kingsley. Without a doubt, the star of the show is “School of Fishes,” which is seemingly simple in design yet amazingly complex in execution. For his piece, French artist Armand P. Arman welded several hundred vice grips together to assemble a school of fish. Kingsley can’t even hazard a guess as to how many grips are involved, but she estimates the piece’s weight at two tons.

“Four people couldn’t lift it, so we had to bring in a hydraulic lift,” she says. “The guys were nice to do it, and afterward they just stuck around and were checking out the art. They loved this exhibit.” Accordingly, Kingsley says she “It’s not just educational — it’s entertaining.”

Name:

Answer these questions in complete sentences:

1. Define the word art (what would the dictionary say art means?).
Write it in your own words.
2. Describe the artwork: What does it look like? What colors are used? What materials are used? Etc.

3. Sum up the article in one paragraph. Basically, pick out the important parts to share with someone who hasn't read the article.

4. What is unusual about this artwork?

5. Form an opinion about whether or not this should be considered art. **Explain** why or why not.

6. Write down your reactions to the art. What do you like, or dislike? Would you have this in your house? Why or why not?