



WHAT'S IN THE FRIDGE?

New Museum Kids Menu provides families with activities to learn about contemporary art and ideas at home.

After studying painting in the U.S. in the late 1950s and early 60s, artist Peter Saul traveled to Europe, where he continued thinking about American culture through comic books, advertisements, and other forms of consumer culture. He was interested in images that didn't seem to belong in "serious" art. During this time, Saul created his series of *Icebox* paintings, **surreal** and expressive depictions of an everyday object: the refrigerator.

You can see images of Peter Saul's work and hear him speak about the *Icebox* series and more in his New Museum retrospective exhibition "Crime and Punishment" [**on our website**](#).

Note for Caregivers: *Peter Saul often uses strong imagery to critique a culture of violence. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to preview content before choosing and sharing images with young family members.*

KEY WORDS

Surreal: dreamlike, nonsensical, fantastical experiences, imagery, and works of art

Anthropomorphism: when non-human animals, objects, or ideas are given human characteristics

START WITH ART: PETER SAUL



Peter Saul has described *Ice Box 8* (1963) as depicting a “boy in the shape of a red coke bottle, wearing polka dot underwear, running in front of an icebox.” He describes things in “improper” places in this series: “You have disarrangement. At the time [in the 1960s], this would be considered unusual because an ice box was a model for being clean and orderly.”

- What’s surreal about this picture?
- How are inside and outside mixed up? Are there things that you think belong inside a fridge and things that do not?
- Do you find the picture funny, confusing, or something else entirely?
- What speech bubbles would you add to imagine more of the story begun in this picture?

LOOK AROUND

Do you know any cartoons, books, advertisements, toys, or comics that **anthropomorphize** everyday objects? Have you seen something like a clock, a tooth, or a sponge given human characteristics and personality?

MAKE ART

Let’s make a surreal kitchen comic for the refrigerator.

Materials

- Pencil
- Markers or colored pencils
- Paper (either 8½" x 11" printer paper or construction paper)
- Scissors
- Tape or glue
- Magnets or masking tape

Making

1. Using a pencil, draw the outlines of two or three food items or objects you find in the kitchen. Use a full sheet of paper for each one. Begin by using simple shapes like squares, triangles, circles, and rectangles. Then refine the shape and add details like handles, bottle necks, or caps.
2. With markers or colored pencils, turn your object into an anthropomorphic character by adding features onto the sides that will be the visible front. Draw and cut out legs, arms, shoes, or clothing and attach them with tape or glue on the back side of the character.
3. Draw and cut out speech balloons for each character. Write dialogue in the speech balloons.
4. Using refrigerator magnets or masking tape on any smooth surface, position your characters and their speech balloons. Decide if you want the characters to speak with one another and whether they will communicate with people in the kitchen. Each day change the characters' position, change their speech balloons, or add a new character.
5. 3-D Option: Create characters for a refrigerator puppet theater by adding construction paper legs, arms, eyes, and smiles to packaging, bottles, cans, or fruit and veggies. Script or improvise a play in the kitchen. Send a video of your surreal play to friends and family.

REFLECTION

- Is your kitchen comic funny, confusing, or surreal?
- Will your characters change over time? Have the characters or their words surprised family members who don't expect to see them on the fridge?
- Do the characters live in a separate world or are they part of the everyday life of the kitchen?

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MUSEUM

IMAGE:

Peter Saul, *Ice Box #8*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 74 3/4 x 63 in (189.9 x 160 cm). Hall Collection. Courtesy Hall Art Foundation.

Photo: Jeffrey Nintzel

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