



The Most Difficult Journey: Abstract Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

September 29, 2004, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

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List of Postcards

1. Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), American
Devil at the Keyboard, 1972, edition 74/75
Color lithograph on paper
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1980.078
© 2004 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
2. Richard Diebenkorn, (1922-1993), American
Untitled #39, 1963
Engraving (drypoint on paper)
Mrs. Paul L. Wattis
Museum # 1976.028
3. Gene Davis (1920-1985), American
Jasmine Sidewinder #91, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Warshaw, and Mrs. Paul L. Wattis
Museum # 1973.044
4. Nell Blaine (1922- 1996), American
Three Fish, 1980
Oil on canvas
Purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
Museum # 1981.015
5. Sam Francis (1923-1994), American
One Cent Life
Color lithograph
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1968.003.011.008
© 2004 The Estate of Sam Francis/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
6. Lee Krasner (1908-1984), American
Gold Stone, Primary Series, 1969, edition 56/100
Lithograph on paper
Gift of Dr. Frank J. Hildner
Museum # 1980.114
© 2004 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



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Devil at the Keyboard

Willem de Kooning (1904-1997)



Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), American
Devil at the Keyboard, 1972, edition 74/75
Color lithograph on paper
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1980.078 © 2004 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists
Rights Society (ARS), New York
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

An integral member of the first generation of New York School artists, Willem de Kooning made a singular contribution to the transformation of American art in the years immediately following the Second World War. Resolutely resisting the imperative of pure abstraction, de Kooning moved the European figurative tradition into the realm of late modern abstraction. Although he mastered the complexities of the various forms of abstraction that were prevalent in New York during the years preceding the war, he continued to explore the challenges of modernist figural representation.

Born in Holland, de Kooning received instruction in art at the Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts and, at the same time, worked for an art director who taught him about Jugendstil, de Stijl, and modernist French styles. Determined to seek employment as an artist in the United States, de Kooning immigrated illegally in 1926, but was able to obtain the necessary papers to allow him to live and work temporarily in the United States. He worked as a free-lance commercial artist, and was awarded several commissions by the Works Project Administration,

which, in its earliest period, did not enforce a citizenship requirement.

Devil at the Keyboard, printed in 1972, is an acknowledged reference to Thelonious Monk (1917-1982) who was known for his innovations with the new jazz which, like Abstract Expressionism, challenged traditional forms. In reaction to conformist pressures, both Monk and de Kooning fit Clement Greenberg's definition of the artist who is both isolated and alienated in a capitalist culture, but who, by creating new forms, is a politically influential force.

During the 1970s, de Kooning was primarily occupied with lithography and sculpture, both of which allowed him to explore forms he had incorporated into his earlier works. *Devil at the Keyboard* repeats the signature fluid linearity and summary approach to the figure paintings of the 1940s, and drawings of the 1960s.

Abstract Expressionism: *Devil at the Keyboard*

An art lesson plan for *Devil at the Keyboard*
written by Tiya Karaus

Abstract Expressionism

Objective

Students will create an abstract portrait of a classmate.

State core links:

Standard 1 :Making

Students will assemble and create drawings by manipulating art media and by organizing images with the elements and principles.

Objective B: Create drawings using art elements and principles.

Create expressive drawings using art elements, including line, shape, form, value, contour, and perspective.

Materials:

drawing paper

scratch paper

pencils

erasers

crayons, markers, or paint

Initiation:

There are a variety of ways to introduce Willem de Kooning and Abstract Expressionism to students, choose from one or all of the following:

- Play a sample of the music of Thelonius Monk. Ask students about what they have just heard. Display a photograph of Thelonius Monk (two are provided at the end of the lesson). Then display postcard of Willem de Kooning's "Devil at the Keyboard". Explain that this is Willem de Kooning's representation of Thelonius Monk playing piano.
- A brief biography of Willem de Kooning follows the lesson plan, this may be read in full or highlights may be drawn to share with students.
- A time line/vocabulary worksheet also follows the lessons, which may be adapted for students' needs in grades 5-12.
- Examples of Willem de Kooning's work can be found in the books listed in the sources section of the lesson plan. (All are available through the Salt Lake library system).

Project:

1. Ask students to hold their non-writing hand on the desk in front of them in an interesting position.
2. Explain for the next 30 seconds they are to do nothing other than examine the lines that make up their hands.
3. Now pass out scratch paper and pencil. Students will again arrange their hands in an interesting pose, however this time they will be drawing the lines that make up their hands. There are two important stipulations: Students are NOT allowed to look at their paper while they are drawing and they will only have two minutes to complete their drawings.
4. The completed Blind Contour Drawing of the hand should look wild and abstract, in fact, the more so the better! (Blind Contour Drawing refers to a line drawing where the artist does not look at the paper. They are often used as a warm-up to free the mind and get the creative juices flowing.)
5. Next students will pair up with a classmate. Drawing paper should be passed out to the student drawing. The student who is modeling for the portrait will need to get into position for the student drawing. This portrait will also be a Blind Contour Drawing. Absolutely NO looking at the paper, and set a five-minute time limit.
6. Have students switch roles and complete the second portrait.
7. If students choose to, they can make their portraits more abstract by erasing between three and five lines.
8. Finally, outline the pencil marks with crayons, markers or paints.

Assessment: see attached rubric

Blind Contour Portrait Rubric

Abstract Appearance

5 points Portrait is abstract. Did not look at the paper while drawing.	4 points	3 points Portrait is somewhat abstract. Looked somewhat at the paper while drawing.	2 points	1 point Portrait is not abstract. Often looked at the paper while drawing.
--	----------	--	----------	---

Complete

5 points All pencil lines are outlined	4 points	3 points Some pencil lines are outlined	2 points	1 point Few pencil lines are outlined
---	----------	--	----------	--

Sources:

Willem de Kooning by David Catelaris

Willem de Kooning by Harry F. Gough

Willem de Kooning by Thomas B. Hess

Willem de Kooning: paintings by Marla Prather.

Variations:

Further warm-up can be done with other everyday objects found in the classroom.

Project Variations for younger students:

- Draw a portrait of a classmate. Have them look at the paper, although a time limit may still be helpful. Outline all pencil lines with crayons.
- Draw a face on a piece of paper. Cut out all the parts of the face (eyes, ears, nose etc.) and re-arrange them on a face-shaped piece of construction paper in an abstract manner. Use glue to secure the pieces.

Extension

Visual Arts:

Further exploration of the work of Abstract Expressionist artist from the New York School; Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, and Robert Motherwell

Social Studies:

Topics for further research: Great Depression, Works Progress Administration.

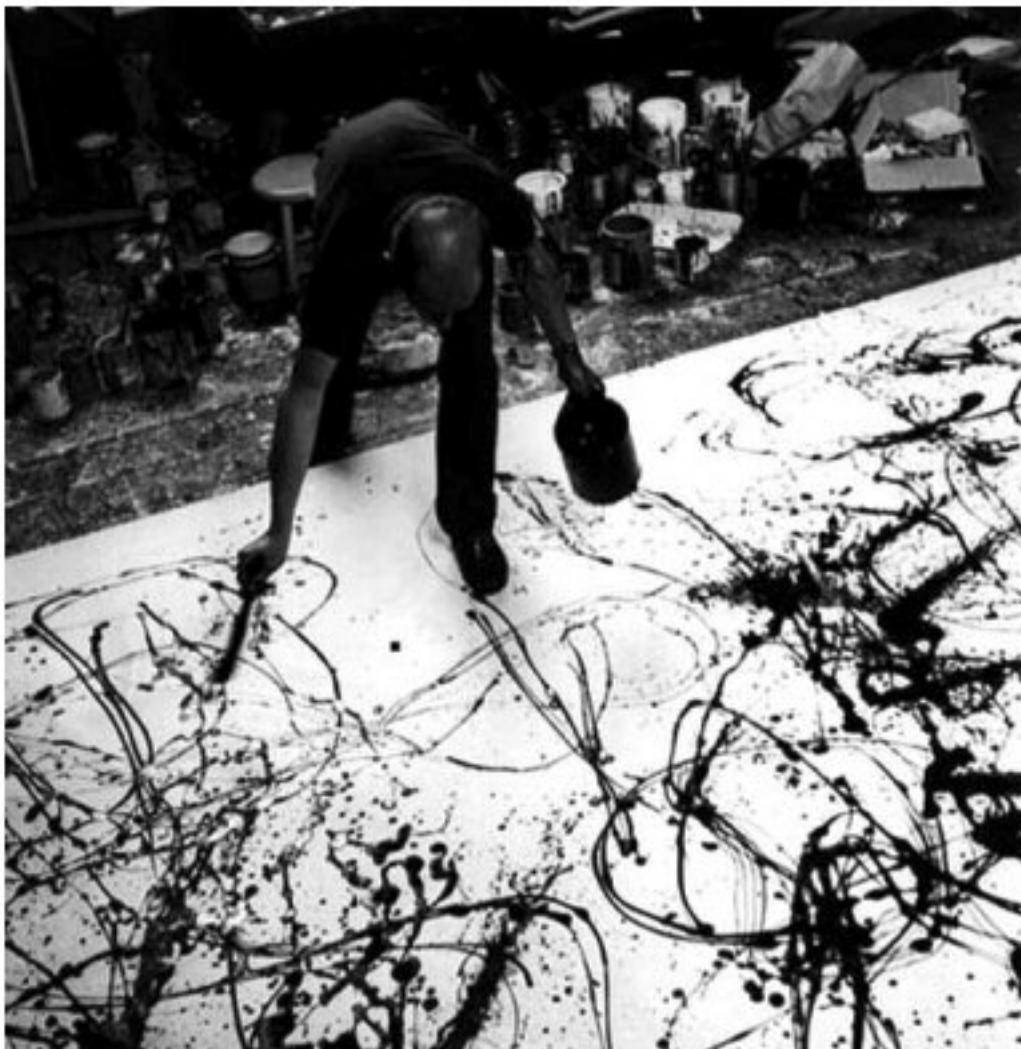
Extended Biography of Willem de Kooning

Willem de Kooning was born in 1904 in Rotterdam, Netherlands. At the age of twelve he apprenticed for a commercial art and decorating firm. He was encouraged by the owners to study further at the Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts and Techniques. After studying for eight years he graduated and attempted to emigrate to the United States. After a few unsuccessful tries at legal emigration, de Kooning boarded a ship and hid in the crew's quarters until it docked in Virginia. Once in America, he worked odd jobs as a commercial artist, house painter and carpenter. In 1935, during the Great Depression, de Kooning spent a year painting murals as part of the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration. This year marked a dramatic shift in his life. He decided to commit to working as an artist, painting full time and only doing odd-jobs to supplement his income.

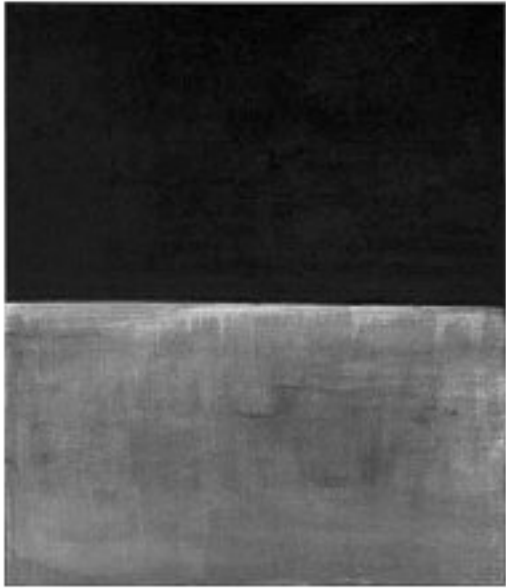
Willem de Kooning soon became associated with a group of artists in New York City. Although these artists had a variety of styles they shared an approach to art that was different and new. They were aware of the avant-garde European art movements of Cubism, Surrealism, and Expressionism, however they took their art a step further and in doing so sparked the Abstract Expressionist movement, the first internationally significant art movement to have its roots in America. This group was known as the New York School and, in addition to de Kooning, it included Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, and Robert Motherwell. Their art focused on form and color, rather than a pictorial representation of an object. It was called abstract because often there were no identifiable

objects present in the art. They turned their focus to the process by which the art was created, making this central to what the art was about. Another defining feature was the size of the canvases they used, many were monumental in dimension. It is said that the movement can be broken down in to two broad categories; action painting and color field painting. Action painting emphasized the physical action of painting. De Kooning is part of this group although Jackson Pollock flinging brushes loaded with paint at his canvases embodies the idea more clearly. Color Field Painting focuses on the effects of pure color on the canvas. This style is typified by the work of Mark Rothko.

In the mid-late 1930's de Kooning worked on a series of paintings focused on women. He participated in groups shows with other members of the New York School. It was not until 1948 that he had his first solo show at the Egan Gallery in New York. This show established him as a major artist. Never one to rest on past successes, he changed not only his subject matter but also his medium. In the 1950's he did another series with women as subjects, then a series of abstract urban and rural landscapes. His attention turned back to women in the 1960's. In 1969, he did his first sculpture, which he produced by modeling clay and then casting it in bronze. In the 1970's he also made numerous lithographs, including "Devil at the Keyboard". The 1970's was a time of recognition of his work with a traveling show organized by both the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Guggenheim Museum of New York City. Other shows and awards followed. Willem de Kooning died March 19, 1997 on Long Island.



Jackson Pollock at work
Photograph © 1999 Estate of Hans Namuth



Untitled (Black on Grey), 1969/1970. Acrylic on canvas, 80 1/4 x 69 1/8 inches. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Gift, The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc. 86.3422. © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Willem de Kooning

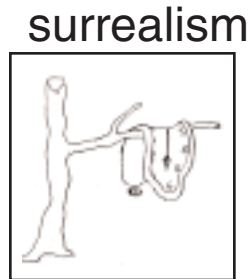
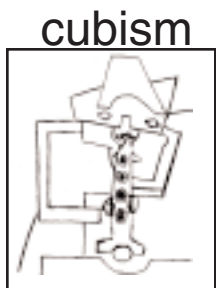
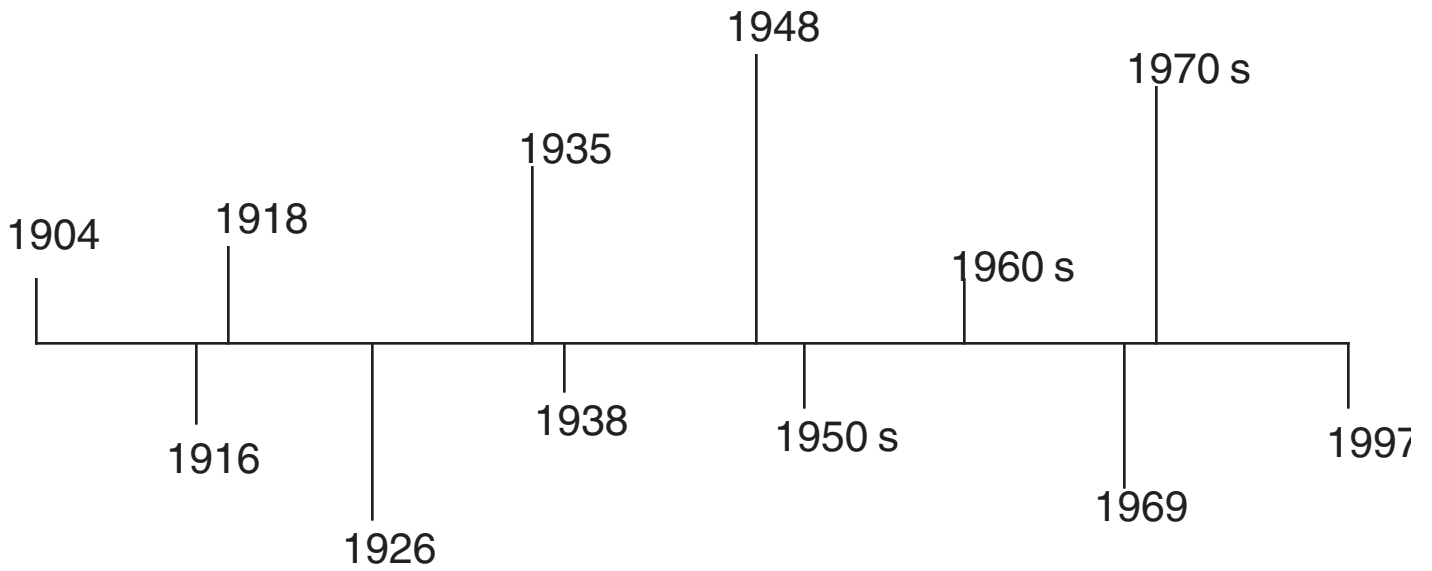


Excavation
Willem de Kooning
Oil on canvas, 1950



Thelonius Monk

Willem de Kooning



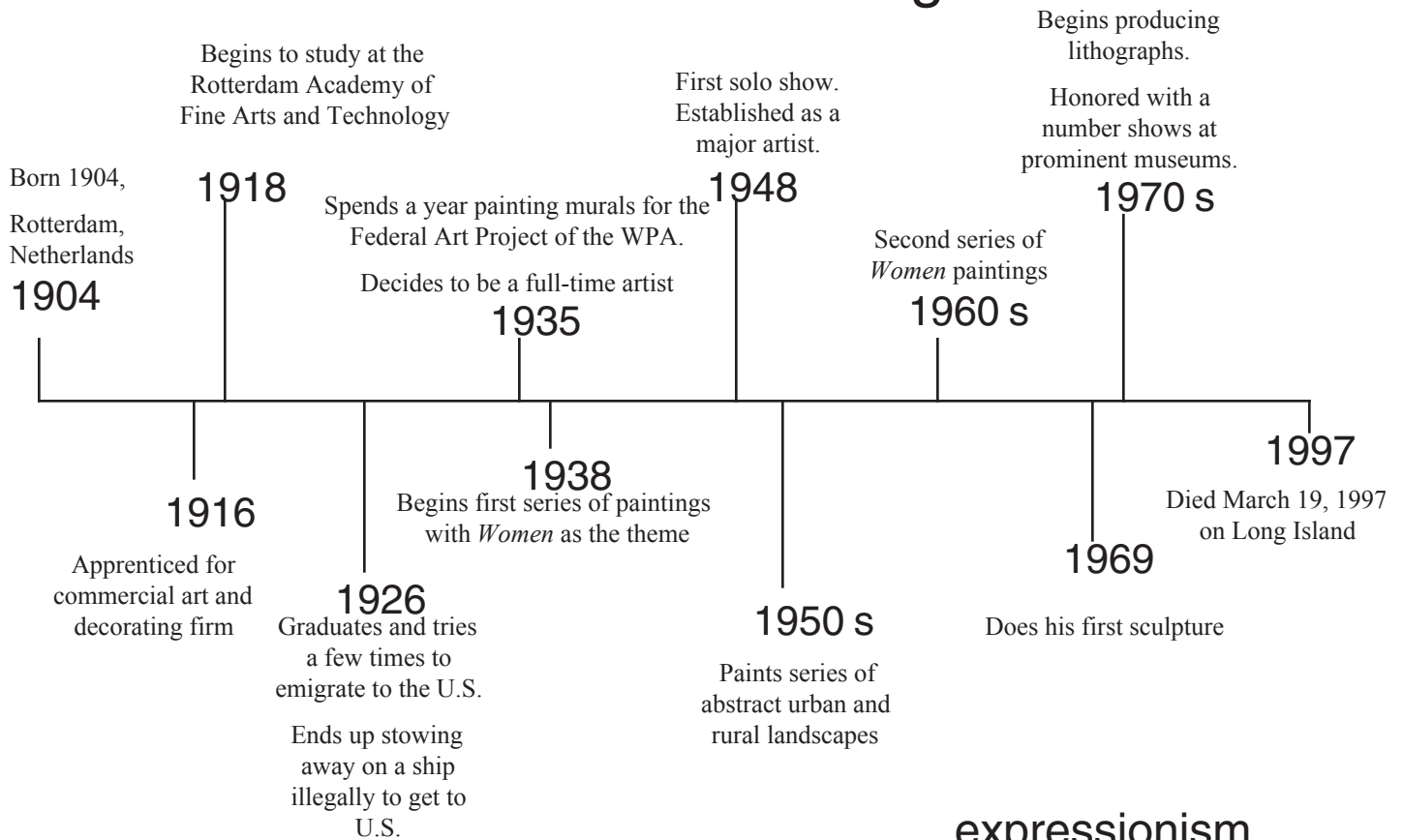
expressionism



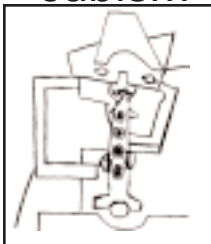
abstract expressionism



Willem de Kooning



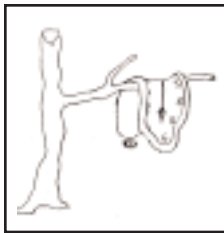
cubism



1908 - 1920

Typified by the work of Pablo Picasso, a modern art movement in painting and sculpture. Objects were represented using cubes or other geometric forms. In addition several views of the subject may appear at once.

surrealism



1924 - 1950's

Salvador Dali is the most famous of the surrealists. Surrealism was a fine arts, literature and film movement, which often presented images in a dream-like manner or familiar objects out of context. Emphasis was placed on the sub-conscious mind and the fantastic ideas that are created there.

expressionism



1905 - 1940's

Primarily a German art movement. In expressionism emphasis was placed on portraying the artist's feeling about the subject rather than accurately rendering a likeness of the subject. The work of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner exemplified this emotional-charged style.

abstract expressionism



1946 - 1960's

The first American art movement of international significance. Often called the New York School. Unlike previous movements, there is no attempt to render a likeness of an object. The artist expresses himself through color and form. Creating the art is more important than the final product.



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Untitled #39

Richard Diebenkorn (1922-1993)



Richard Diebenkorn was born in Portland, Oregon in 1922. Too poor to buy expensive art supplies, he sketched instead on recycled posters with whatever he could find. Diebenkorn completed his studies at the most prestigious schools; Stanford, the University of California at Berkeley and the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. He worked as an independent artist and taught or worked as a resident artist at various universities for virtually his whole life. Diebenkorn's artistic influences include Edward Hopper, Piet Mondrian, Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning.

His style evolved first from Abstract Expressionism to gestural figuration and finally to abstracted, geometric landscapes. His stylistic periods are named for the places where he worked with the earliest being the Sausalito period followed respectively by the Albuquerque, Urbana and Berkeley periods. *Untitled #39* was completed in 1963 and falls into his Berkeley period.

Richard Diebenkorn, (1922-1993), American
Untitled #39, 1963
Engraving (drypoint on paper)
Mrs. Paul L. Wattis
Museum # 1976.028
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

Shape, Repetition & Contrast

A lesson plan for *Untitled #39*
written by Karey Rawitscher

Abstracting the View

Objective(s)

Students will be able to identify how an artist uses shape, contrast and repetition to create a coherent composition.

Student will be able to evaluate and represent the classroom environment as a series of abstract shapes and lines

Students will be able to use shape size and value contrast to create areas of emphasis

Students will use repetition to create a coherent composition

State core links

5th Grade Core Curriculum

Standard 1

The student will explore and refine the application of media, techniques, and artistic processes.

Objective 2

Predict the processes and techniques needed to make a work of art.

- Preplan the steps or tasks to achieve a desired image.
- Select appropriate media in which to portray a variety of subjects for works of art.
- Use preparatory sketches to solve visual problems before beginning an actual work of art.

Standard 3

The student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes.

Objective 1

Explore possible content in art prints or works of art.

- Determine the context by examining the subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, and meanings in significant works of art.
- Explore the meanings of nonrepresentational significant works of art.

6th grade Core Curriculum

Standard 1

The student will explore and refine the application of media, techniques, and artistic processes.

Objective 2

Predict the processes and techniques needed to make a work of art.

- Consider a variety of ideas before starting a work of art.
- Make thumbnail sketches, storyboards, or verbal descriptions to help organize art ideas before beginning the actual piece.

Standard 2

The student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art.

Objective 1

Analyze and reflect on works of art by their elements and principles.

- Differentiate and identify colors by value and intensity within works of art.

- Compare/contrast ways in which artists have used elements such as line, shape, color, value, and texture in both significant 2-D and 3-D works of art.
- Hypothesize ways artists choose to use certain elements or principles more abundantly in their works than others.
- Point out the use of line, shape, color, value, and/or texture in works created by students.

Foundations I (7-12th) Core Curriculum

Standard 1

Making

Students will assemble and create works of art by experiencing a variety of art media and by learning the art elements and principles

Objective A Explore a variety of art media, techniques, and processes.

- Experiment with a variety of media, including current arts-related technologies.
- Experience the expressive possibilities of art media, techniques, and processes.
- Practice safe and responsible use of art media, equipment, and studio space.

Objective B Create works of art that show the use of the art elements and principles.

- Create expressive works of art using art elements, including line, shape, form, value, and color.
- Create expressive works of art using the art principles, including balance, repetition, color relationships, and emphasis, to organize the art elements.

Standard 2

Perceiving

Students will find meaning by analyzing, criticizing, and evaluating works of art.

Objective A Critique works of art.

- Describe artworks according to use of art elements and principles.
- Examine the functions of art.
- Interpret works of art.

Objective B Evaluate works of art.

- Learn how to use aesthetic approaches to compare and discuss works of art.
- Evaluate works of art based on how they were created, effective use of the art elements and principles, fulfillment of functions, and expressive qualities.

Materials

2 sheets 12x18 paper or larger per student (one heavy enough to take paint)

pencils

charcoal pencils and chalk or black ink

small and large brushes

water cups and paper towels to clean brushes

pastels (optional)

acrylic or tempera paint (preferably acrylic)

rulers

Aerosol hairspray or art fixative if using charcoal or pastels

reproductions: *Untitled #39* by Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park #54* by Richard Diebenkorn (image is available as a poster from- store.yahoo.com/sfmoma/po3.html), any work by Kandinsky, Mondrian, Rothko, and Pollock (or other artists working in abstract style)

Activity

Begin by helping students understand the process of abstraction.

An artist may use an experience or observation from life, an idea or an emotion and abstract it to its essence using line, shape, color and composition. Although it may have representational elements the aim is not to be strictly representational, but rather to use the elements and principles of art to their own end.

Explain to the students that Western abstract art was developed in the last 100 years and was one of the most notable developments that took place in art during the 1900's. If you have the time and resources to show some examples, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Rothko and Pollock show a good spectrum of styles. Students can briefly compare and contrast the artists. Ask students what idea, emotion or thing each artist is trying to convey. Have the students describe the works in terms of line, shape, color and design.

Explain to the students that with their knowledge of abstract art they will now focus their attention on artist Richard Diebenkorn, a prominent abstract expressionist from California who worked from the late 50's until his death in 1993. He is most noted for his *Ocean Park* series of paintings and drawings he did in the 70's and 80's. In this series as in other abstract works he uses the landscape as a jumping off point, but the resulting work's reference to the landscape is tenuous. Ultimately the paintings are about painting.

Show the students the image of *Untitled #39*, a representation of the artist's studio wall. This is a print (engraving) owned by the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

Questions:

What is pictured in this image?

What shape is most repeated in this image? Where are examples of rectangles within rectangles?

What part of the image are your eyes most drawn to and why do you think this is? (Notice how the light shapes move the eye from the bottom left corner diagonally to the right and then to the top of the page or vice versa.)

In what ways is this image abstracted? (loose sketchiness or gestural quality of the image, also the drawings on the wall serve as shapes on a background. This is a composition of rectangles.)

What happens on the edges of the image?

Show the students the image of *Ocean Park #54* and provide a brief intro. This painting is from his famous *Ocean Park* series. *Ocean Park #54* is owned by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Diebenkorn painted 140 large canvases over a twenty year period. These paintings are named for the section of Santa Monica where his studio was located. He was inspired by the manmade and natural landscapes he viewed on his daily walk to his studio and by the views through his studio window, but ultimately the paintings are about the process of painting. Of the *Ocean Park* series he said: "My idea was simply to get all the elements right. By that I mean everything: color, form, space, line, composition, what all this might add up to-everything at once." The paintings are described as luminous, atmospheric, concerned with light and surface, and with open and closed forms. They also illustrate his process, as the reworking of his canvases is integrated into his compositions.

Questions:

How is this work different from *Untitled #39*? How is it the same?

What shapes has the artist used in this composition?

How would you describe the colors?

What is the main area of emphasis in the image?

How has he used color and contrast to provide emphasis?

In what ways does the image reference the landscape? (color-ocean blue and sky blue, horizon lines, vertical lines of structures, luminosity, etc.)

Where are examples of the canvas being reworked?

How does his treatment of the edges effect the composition? (Contains or encloses certain areas of the composition, opens up and makes boundless other parts...like a landscape.)

Following the discussion students will create their own works of art.

Art Making

Give students one of the sheets of paper and direct them to fold it horizontally and vertically so they have 4 sections that are 6" x 9". Have them choose a section of the classroom. Explain they will do four preparatory sketches in charcoal (or ink). In the first one they can try to realistically represent the view they have chosen. Remind them to think about the composition...that elements of the composition can bleed out of the image or go right to the edge, that repeating shapes can unify the composition, that creating contrasting areas of light and dark and shape size can emphasize areas of the composition. Also tell them that the area of emphasis does not have to be in the center of the composition. In the next three sketches they will work from the initial sketch. They will use it as a departure point for creating more abstract images. Tell them to think of it as a composition of shapes and lines. They can play with the composition; zoom in on a small section of the initial sketch, create different light and dark areas, experiment with different types of marks. If your students need more direction you can create a parameter for each sketch. For example the second one should zoom in, the third one should reverse the light and dark areas, the fourth one should be composed of lines (no rubbing) much like *Untitled #39*. They could also make the area of emphasis shift in each sketch or create an image with no area of emphasis. Remind them that the last three images should be abstract. Optional: Students can add color with pastels if they like. This is especially nice if sketches are done ink.

Once the initial sketches are complete, students will choose one to further develop in a painting. Show them *Ocean Park #54* again. Give them the paper, paint, brushes, and a ruler. They can do an initial layout in pencil or charcoal if they feel they need to do so, but one of the lessons of Diebenkorn is that the process of developing the image is an integral part of the final image. Next students should choose a palette of colors. Remind them that using a contrasting color to the overall palette whether it is light/dark or complementary contrast can create an area of emphasis. Also point out that in the Diebenkorn painting there are no areas of solid color apart from the dark rectangle on the upper left edge. All the other areas have subtle shifts. This is what gives the painting its luminous quality. They can use a ruler to create straight lines in the composition if they want to use Diebenkorn's method. Once they have mixed their palette they can begin to make their painting. After they have laid an initial layer of paint down they should continue to build the paint up in areas. They can do this in washes or thinned paint that is lighter, darker, or a hue shift from the ground color. They can build certain areas up with thicker paint. They should feel free to experiment with the painting process and to make compositional changes as need be. These changes can be kept as a visible part of the painting. How will your student know when their painting is complete? This is the most difficult part, because it is an intuitive response to the image... when the image invokes a feeling that the colors and composition are coherent and have a sense of rightness to them. This is subjective, but a student should be able to defend and explain their choices.

Assessment

Once the paintings are complete students should hang their sketches and paintings for a critique. The questions that were used to analyze the Diebenkorn work can be used to critique the student's work. Students should use terminology such as abstract, composition, shape, repetition, emphasis, hue and contrast when discussing the work.

Rubric

Art Rubric - an Artwork Assessment Form by Marvin Bartel

Category	Your name _____ Artist's name _____ Description	Check & comment here		
		Excellent	Average	Needs work
Growth	How does this work compare to previous work by same person?			
	Does it show more feeling and expressiveness?			
	Does it show more thought?			
	Does it show more skill?	.	.	.
Creativity	How original, innovative, and daring is the work?			
	Does it extend or change from past work done by same student?	.	.	.
Fulfills Assignment	How well does the work solve the problems outlined in this assignment?			
	Are the variations from the assignment made for a valid reason?	.	.	.
Care	Is the making of the work appropriate for the style of art being made?			
	Didn't rush to get it done, but paid attention to consistency in the work.	.	.	.
Helpful	Was the student cooperative & generous in discussions & in helping others without doing it for them?			
	Were good questions asked?	.	.	.
Work Habits	Did the student stay on the job?			
	Were conversations with classmates about the artwork, not other topics?	.	.	.
Composition And Design	How are principles of design and composition used to make the visual elements work well?			
	Is it free from mistakes that distract from the unity and effectiveness of the whole?			

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Sources

These two links will provide a quick overview of the history and development of abstract art. They also provide links to specific artists that represent different styles and movements in abstract art.

www.artelino.com/articles/abstract_art.asp

www.artelino.com/articles/modern_art_periods.asp

This is the website of the Museum of Modern Art. This website is a good source of images and has an online activity for children exploring modern art.

www.moma.org/

This is the website of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The first link is to the home page, the second is an overview of a Diebenkorn exhibit that was at the Museum. This is the museum that owns Ocean Park #54 used in the lesson plan.

www.sfmoma.org

www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/exhib_detail/98_exhib_diebenkorn.html

This website offers links to images, biographical information and articles about Richard Diebenkorn.

www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/diebenkorn_richard.html

Variations

This lesson can be made simpler for upper elementary school children. Students can be shown examples of abstract works of art, then shown the Diebenkorn works. Above questions can be used or adapted for discussion. Teacher should have students focus on an area of the classroom and analyze the shapes and lines that are present. Teacher should make a quick sketch on the board demonstrating how to render the shapes and lines with out trying to represent specific things, Students will then make an abstract drawing with oil pastels, crayons or a painting with tempera. They will use the classroom or an outside area as their inspiration. Students should be encouraged to be creative in their color choices and to make sure their composition extends to the edges of the paper.

Extension(s)

Music-Students could choose different paintings from the Ocean Park series and locate music that compliments the image.

Language-Students can write a haiku to accompany their finished painting. Example:

A whisper of blue

Insistent lines carving space

Luminous, boundless

Math-Elementary students can use rulers to draw lines and shapes; they can measure the lines and shapes, noting the size and proportion relationships between the different lines and shapes. They can also use a compass or protractor to create different angles.



Richard Diebenkorn
Ocean Park #54



The Most Difficult Journey: Abstract Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

September 29, 2004, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Jasmine Sidewinder #91



Gene Davis (1904-1997)

Washington D.C. was always a part of Gene Davis. He was born there in 1920, worked there, and died there in 1985. Davis' first career was in the media, working as a White House correspondent, reporter and sportswriter for various newspapers. In the 1960s, Davis was a part of the Washington Color School, which delved into and simplified the most elemental aspects of painting like color, space and line. His use of line is, in fact, what Davis is best known for. His paintings are typified by stripes that fluctuate in width and pattern. Of his striped pieces Davis states, "The subject of my work is color interval, the space between colors. And this is just as valid a subject matter as the proverbial nude or bouquet of flowers. Stripes are simply the device by which I define color interval." Davis also connected music, specifically jazz, to the rhythm of his pieces. Indeed, the lines and the intervals between them resonate the cadence of jazz. The name "Post-Painterly Abstraction" was given to this style of purely formal works and promoted by the famous art critic, Clement Greenberg in his 1964 exhibition

Gene Davis (1920-1985), American
Jasmine Sidewinder #91, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Warshaw, and Mrs. Paul L. Wattis
Museum # 1973.044
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

Forms of Expression, Pieces of the Whole

A lesson plan for *Jasmine Sidewinder #91* written by Andrea Heidinger

Objective:

This lesson has three parts:

- 1.) As a class the students will identify the elements and principles used in Gene Davis' *Jasmine Sidewinder #91* and talk about the arrangement's emotional impact.
- 2.) They will explore variations of this composition and discuss the change in expression.
- 3.) Finally, they will make their own abstract expressionist composition.

State core links:

Fine Arts Visual Arts: Grade 3 (Standard 2), Grade 4 (Standard 2)

Materials:

- Slide or large version of *Jasmine Sidewinder #91*
- Construction paper (or ideally Color Aid paper) closely matching the colors in the composition and cut into the proportional sizes. The students could make the measurements and cut strips for this activity of coming up with the basic proportions could be a learning opportunity. Also, older students could paint their strips and practice paint mixing and matching skills.
- Tape to temporarily hang the strips on a blank white board to make it easy for the students to see the compositions they form.
- Extra construction paper of other colors
- Glue stick for assembling the final individual compositions.

Activity:

1.) Introduce the students to the ideas of abstract expressionism. Discuss how the artists of this movement felt that the elements of art, most specifically color and shape could be as powerful an expression as using familiar images and symbols. Therefore many of their compositions were made of simple shapes and lines arranged in a specific way to relate an emotion. Essentially Davis believed that color and geometric shapes and lines could have as much expressive value and content as pictorial pieces of artwork. Have the students make observations of *Jasmine Sidewinder #91*, discuss what elements (color, line) and principles (repetition, rhythm, etc.) make up the composition and what emotional qualities they feel the piece is expressing. Note: Davis' work contains the use of different values (i.e. purple and light purple, darker and lighter green), for older or more advanced grades you can discuss this and incorporate it into the activities. For the younger classes you could discuss the overall effect of the grouped values which results in larger bands of color.

2.) By using the correct number of paper strips similar in color and size to Gene Davis' work, the students will collaborate to create their own compositions using the same elements as Davis did. They can construct the piece by taping the strips onto a white board. Discuss how reassembling the elements and incorporating different principles can change the work both formally and expressively.

3.) As individuals, have the students explore line compositions of their own with construction paper of different colors, scissors, and glue. Have them present these pieces to the class and discussion can ensue about the variety of expressions they have made using the same basic elements and principles as Gene Davis.

Assessment

Be aware of the comments the students make as you discuss the elements and principles at work in Davis' composition, their amount of participation in forming other compositions together, and their attention in their follow-up discussion. Lastly evaluate their finished individual works for completeness, craftsmanship, and thoughtfulness.

Extensions

Explore other artists that use simple elements to express ideas or emotions, i.e. previous artists such as Piet Mondrian or Kasimir Malevich or Davis' contemporaries, like Kenneth Noland and Barnett Newman.

When creating the variations in activity 2 the students could practice their paint mixing and matching skills to make their strips of paper. Grade 7-12 (Standard 1)

Discuss the different widths of lines, how many there are of each color, their size, and the proportion of the composition each of them they take up. This break down of the composition could speak to the following curriculum: Mathematics: grade 2 (Standard 1 and 2), Mathematics: grade 1 (Standard 3).

Activity 1: Discussion about *Jasmine Sidewinder* #91

5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Participate thoughtfully in discussion.		Participated in discussion.		Did not participate.

Activity 2: Collaborative variations pieces and discussion

5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Participated actively in decision making for new composition and participated thoughtfully in discussion.		Participated in groups composition and discussion.		Did not contribute to composition or discussion in a meaningful way.

Activity 3: Individual Abstract expressionist piece.

5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Piece is complete.		Piece is less complete.		Piece is not complete.

5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Piece is very neat in appearance.		Piece is fairly neat in appearance.		Piece is not neat in appearance.

5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Piece is thoughtful and goal understood.		Piece is somewhat thoughtful and understood.		Piece's goal is not understood.



The Most Difficult Journey: Abstract Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

September 29, 2004, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Three Fish

Nell Blaine (1922-1996)

Nell Blaine was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1922 and began her artistic endeavors at the Richmond School of Art. In 1942, Blaine move to New York where she studied painting under Hans Hoffman and etching and engraving under Stanley William Hayter. Two years later she became the youngest member of the American Abstract Artists group and worked with the Jane Street Group, which formed the first artists cooperative gallery in New York. Blaine was firmly established in the Abstract Art world, yet she began to feel that the very nature of abstraction was too constricting. After 1950 she worked mostly with recognizable figures, abandoning the niche she had made for herself in Abstraction. In 1959, she contracted polio and could no longer hold a brush steady with her right hand. Blaine simply learned to paint with her left. Her physical condition continued to deteriorate for the rest of her life, but Blaine continued to paint. Her work *Three Fish*, completed in 1980, shows her later, left-handed style.



Nell Blaine (1922- 1996), American
Three Fish, 1980
Oil on canvas
Purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
Museum # 1981.015
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

The Alchemy of Poetry: Turning the Ordinary into the Extraordinary

A 7th and 8th grade Language Arts lesson plan for *Three Fish*
written by Pam Thompson

Objectives:

Using Nell Blaine's painting *Three Fish* as a catalyst, students will write, revise, and publish a free verse poem about color which demonstrates figurative language, variation in line length, and a pleasing visual format.

In creating these poems, students will practice:

- discussion skills
- journal writing
- reading informative literature
- use of reading strategies
- writing in reading logs
- brainstorming
- creating similes, metaphors, and personifications
- working in response groups
- editing skills

State Core Standards:

Grade 7 and 8 Language Art Standards 2,3,5,10,11

Materials:

Included with this lesson plan and ready for photocopying:

Full-color postcard of *Three Fish*

Nell Blaine biography

Full-color sampler of the development of Nell Blaine's painting style (best in full color)

Stephen Quiller's Color Associations and Specific Words for Colors handout

Color Discovery Sheet

Sample Poems from Wendt

Sample Finished Color Poem "Green"

Additional Materials:

Student writing journals and reading logs

Pens, pencils, paper

Activity:

DAY ONE - Prewriting

1. Journal Writing and Discussion about *Three Fish* and Nell Blaine: Explain to the students that they will be starting a several-day writing activity that will use artwork to stimulate poetry writing. Have the students place their writing journals and pens/pencils on their desks. Direct the

students to divide a clean page in their journal in half vertically, creating two columns. Have the students label the left column “Ideas about the Painting” and the right column “Ideas about the Artist.” Ask the students to look carefully and thoughtfully at the painting that you will show them. As they look, they should be thinking about the words they would use to describe the subject, style, colors, textures, shapes, etc., that they see. Explain that there are no right or wrong ideas about the painting, as long as the ideas can be supported by actual features in the painting. Have the students write at least six to ten words or phrases that describe the painting in the left-hand column in their journal. The student’s might even want to write down the title that they would give the painting. Give all students adequate time to examine the painting and write their lists. Prompt the students as necessary.

After the students have finished their lists, initiate a discussion by asking students to share their ideas with the class. Write the students’ ideas on the board and ask them to explain which feature in the painting made them think of that word or idea. Generate as much discussion as possible to stimulate the students’ intellectual and emotional interest in the painting. As ideas are written on the board, ask the students to add several of them to their own lists in their journals. Discuss the students’ ideas for a title if they chose to create them.

Explain that the title of this oil painting is *Three Fish*, and the artist’s name is Nell Blaine. Emphasize that behind every painting there is an artist with his or her own special life story, interests, and artistic goals and style. Now that the students know some things about the painting, ask them to write their ideas about what Nell Blaine was like and what her life might have been like to create such a painting. Explain that *Three Fish* is typical of much of her mature painting style. Have the students write their ideas about Nell Blaine in the right-hand column “Ideas about the Artist.” Give the students adequate time, then ask the students to share their hypotheses about Nell Blaine and her life with the class. Discuss these for a few minutes.

2. Reading, Reading Log and Discussion about Nell Blaine: Tell the students you would like to share a short biography of Nell Blaine with them. Ask the students to place their reading logs on their desks and to put away their journals temporarily. Pass out the copies of Nell Blaine’s biography for the students to read. Ask them to use these three reading strategies as they read: Question, Connect and Visualize. For the visualization, ask them to sketch a scene from Nell Blaine’s life that brought a clear picture to mind. Launch the students into their reading by reading the first page of the biography aloud to them. Then switch to silent reading, partner reading, or whatever is best for your students.

When the students have completed reading the biography and used the reading strategies, start a discussion by asking them what they learned about Nell Blaine’s life and art. Which events most surprised them or were the most different from what they expected? Do they think that her artistic style reveals the problems she faced? Explain to the students that Nell painted *Three Fish* in 1980, after she had polio. So that they may clearly see the progression of her painting style over time, show the students the sampler of Nell Blaine’s paintings. Can the students identify which are the early abstract works? Can they see a point where her style and interest begin to move toward nature, light and color? Ask them why an artist’s style changes over time. Do they think that Nell was the type of person to tackle new styles and take chances in her art?

Ask several students to share their visualization sketches with the class. Have them explain what is going on in their sketches and why that chose to draw that event from Nell Blaine’s life. Then ask the students to retrieve their writing journals and in the column labeled “Ideas about the Artist” list at least five things they want to remember about Nell Blaine’s personality, career, and life.

DAYS TWO AND THREE - More Prewriting

1. Transition to the Poetry Activity: Explain to the students that in *Three Fish*, Nell Blaine was able to change an ordinary platter of fish into a memorable artwork through her artistic choices of composition, colors, shapes, textures, size, brush stroke, etc. Even her point of view (a tight, up close look at the fish) says these fish are important. Her colors surprise us and delight us. They make us think about the fish in new ways. Even a platter of fish can become a celebration of life, a symphony of color. This is the magic of art.

In writing, poetry possesses a similar power to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. Explain that poetry depends on the careful selection of powerful words and images (word pictures). Because poetry compresses ideas, images, and feelings into a few well-chosen words, poetry's power is increased. Often poets choose images that are surprising or unusual to make the reader think about a topic in new ways. Learning to create powerful images through word choice, metaphors, similes, personification, and repetition can unleash the power of poetry for everyone.

Tell the students that over the next few days, using *Three Fish* as a writing stimulus, they will each create a finished poem about a color. Colors are important elements of the painting *Three Fish*. Also, they are common, ordinary things, but the students' jobs are to turn them into the extraordinary through poetry.

2. Selecting a Color: Ask each student to select a color for the topic of his/her poem. Perhaps students would like to select their favorite color in *Three Fish*. A single-word color is probably more effective than a multiple-word color. The students may want a very specific color, such as maroon, or a general color family, such as red. An upcoming information sheet can help them refine the color's name if they desire.

3. Understanding Color Associations: Explain that the power of a color comes not only from the color's ability to dazzle our eyes, but from all the mental and emotional associations we have with the color. Certainly, Nell Blaine knew the power of color. As an artist named Stephen Quiller wrote, "Color is the most emotional element that we, as painters, have." (Quiller, p. 85.)

First, ask a student to name a color. Write that color on the board. Ask other students to name an emotion, feeling, person, place, season, etc., that they associate with the color, creating a list of words on the board. Then, to help the students further understand Quiller's point, give each student a photocopy of "Stephen Quiller's Associations with Twelve Colors." (He has actually created these associations for numerous colors on the color wheel.) Have students read the color associations aloud, letting students pick a favorite color and read about it. Point out that Quiller sees differences in the associations he has with lighter and darker colors (called tints and shades by artists) within the same color family. Color associations can be quite specific and subtle. Ask the students which of the associations with each color most resonate with them. Do any of Quiller's associations surprise them or seem inaccurate?

4. Expanding Color Vocabulary: Colors offer an opportunity to expand students vocabularies. Ask the students to remember the time the reporter watched Nell Blaine squeeze out forty-two different colors on her palette. Those colors must have different names. Have the students examine "Expanding Vocabulary: Specific Words for Colors" at the bottom of the Quiller's color association information sheet. Start students in a discussions of these words by asking which of the color

names they have heard before. Can they picture the exact hues to which the names refer? Challenge the students to investigate one of the color words and tell the class about it tomorrow. Also, you might want to tack a piece of poster board to the bulletin board and ask students to write the names of other colors they know or to search for new color words. Perhaps, the art teacher could share some ideas with them. The idea is to make the list as long as possible. Be sure the students write an explanation of what the color looks like beside the word they add to the list. If a student wants to use a very specific color name for his/her poem, he/she should be sure to look up the color definition in a dictionary, and also find an example of the color to guide him/her in thinking about the color.

5. Using the Color Discovery Sheet: To productively begin this activity the students must have made their final color selections, or have narrowed their choices to no more than two colors. Distribute a Color Discovery Sheet to each student. Students still considering two colors will need two Discovery Sheets. Give the students ample time to brainstorm their associations and fill out the sheet. The words, ideas and images that they write on the sheet will become a major source of ideas for their color poems. Encourage students to write freely without censoring themselves. You might tell them of Stephen Quiller's advice to his art students: "Learn and grow from experience. Remember that your surface is only a canvas or a piece of paper, and that you cannot make mistakes, only create opportunities." (Quiller, p. 85)

When students have completed their Color Discovery Sheets, ask them to review all the words and ideas in each box. As they read, have them circle the words and ideas that create the strongest feelings and images for them. Remind the students that they can add new words to the sheet whenever the inspiration strikes them.

DAY FOUR - Composing Warm-up Poems with Similes, Metaphors, and Personification

The students should now be ready to begin composing some "warm-up poems" about color, allowing them to review and practice three types of figurative language: simile, metaphor, and personification. The following definitions and examples can be used to review these three terms.

Simile - a simile compares two different things using *like* or *as*.
"Raindrops splattered like tiny fireworks."

Metaphor - a metaphor directly compares two different things without using a word of comparison. "A puppy is a tornado of energy."

Personification - personification is a form of figurative language in which an idea (such as color), object, or animal is given the characteristics of a person.
"Moonlight danced delicately on the lake."

Remind the students that the images (word-pictures) created by figurative language are a powerful tools for turning the ordinary into the extraordinary in poetry. An important concept is for the students to **SHOW** the reader, not tell them, about their color. **Have the students place their Color Discovery Sheets and Quiller Color Association Sheets on their desks. They should mine them for ideas and inspirations as they work on today's warm-up poems.**

1. Simile Poem

Have the students use “I know (a color)…” for the first line of the poem. Start each subsequent line with the word “It” followed by a verb and the word “like.” Write the following example on the board:

I know red...
It tastes **like** _____
It looks **like** _____
It feels **like** _____
It sounds **like** _____
It smells **like** _____
It runs **like** _____
It sings **like** _____
It dances **like** _____
It kisses **like** _____

Have the students write a poem about their colors using this format, either in their journals or notebooks. When finished, ask students to exchange notebooks with neighbors. Each should circle the two similes that they find most striking and original in the other’s poem, and then return the notebook to the owner. Ask several students to share their simile poems orally with the class.

2. Metaphor Poem

Have the students use the following format to create a poem. Again start with “I know (a color)…” for the first line. All subsequent lines start with “It’s” followed by a noun and its modifiers. Direct students to create at least five or six metaphors for their colors.

I know green...
It’s noun + modifiers
It’s fresh-mowed **grass** tickling my feet
It’s _____
It’s _____
It’s _____
It’s _____

When students have finished their poems, ask several to come to the board and write their favorite metaphor on the board. Have the class discuss what makes each a powerful image that **shows**, not tells, what the color is like.

3. Personification Poem

Try the following idea from Ingrid Wendt’s book *Starting with Little Things*. Have the students imagine that their color is alive. What can their color do by itself, to them, to other people? Have the students try this format: Start the first line of the poem with the name of the chosen color, followed by an active verb, and then complete the sentence. Have the students brainstorm a list of active verbs. You can write the list on the board for them to look at as they compose. Suggest that their poems contain three examples of personification. Here is a sample poem:

Hot pink **runs** around
my house knocking my mom’s

figurines off the shelves.
(Create two more personifications)

For another example, give the students photocopies of the sheet entitled “Sample Poems from Wendt.” The first poem shows a personification of fear and happiness.

Personifications should create unusually surprising and original images. Ask several students to share their poems and ask for the class’s reactions. What different moods are created by the personifications? Can the students identify and name them?

DAY FIVE - Composing

If you have a computer lab at your school, today would be a good day to use it. **Be sure the students have their Color Discovery Sheets, Quiller Color Associations Sheet, and all their warm-up poems with them.** Today’s objective is for each student to synthesize their most effective and powerful individual words (nouns, adjectives, verbs), similes, metaphors, and personifications into a single, coherent poem about a color.

Before composing begins, introduce one more concept to the students: **line length and poem pattern.** As Ingrid Wendt pointed out, most poems in free verse are written with a variety of long and short lines. This variation in line length creates visual interest and helps convey the meaning and rhythm of the poem. The students should consider using a center justification on the computer as one way to achieve a compelling overall format. Or they might experiment with a right margin justification. Pass out the “Sample Poems from Wendt” so that students may examine the line length in “Otter.” Read the poem and briefly discuss the purposes of the variation in line length in this poem.

Now give the students the sample finished color poem “Green” to look at as a model and guide. Tell them that the finished color poem should meet these criteria:

- It is at least 14 lines in length
- It contains at least 2 examples of each of the following: similes, metaphors, and personifications
- It contain at least one list of nouns, adjectives, or verbs
- It effectively uses a variety of line lengths
- It has been revised by group responders and the author to create powerful and effective images
- It is well edited

Have the students start writing. You should assist, clarify, and suggest as necessary to keep the students motivated and on task.

DAY SIX - Revising and Editing

1. **Response Groups** If you don’t have established response groups in your classes, set them up with four or five students per group.

The students should have the rough drafts of their finished poems, plus all the prewriting materials they used yesterday. Have the students circulate the rough drafts through the group, asking each responder to check for the **required figurative language, the 14 line minimum length, and the variation of line length**. Then, for each poem the students review, they should put a **check** beside the two images they feel are strongest, and **circle** any image that they feel is weak or significantly less effective than the others, suggesting that the author replace that image. Give the students adequate time to think about each poem in their response group.

When responding is completed, the students will need to return to individual work at the computer, doing the final revising and editing of their poems.

Publishing

Here are several possibilities for publishing the students' color poems:

- Create a classroom bulletin board with the poems, or display them in the library for the entire school to read.
- Create and photocopy a class poetry anthology - one booklet for each student. Give the anthology a catchy title like Look What Three Fish Got Us to Write and dedicate it to Nell Blaine and her love of color.
- Conduct a classroom poetry slam, with each student rehearsing an inspired oral reading of his/her color poem that captures the mood and rhythm of the poem.

Assessment:

Decide on the total point value you will give this poem and divide the points according to the following percentages:

- 10% - It is at least 14 lines in length
 - 30% - It contains at least 2 examples of each of the following: similes, metaphors, and personifications
 - 10% - It contain at least one list of nouns, adjectives, or verbs
 - 10% - It effectively uses a variety of line lengths
 - 30% - Images are powerful and overall it is an effective and cohesive poem
 - 10% - It is well edited
- Total is 100%

Extensions:

1. Using the concepts about poetry and figurative language that the students have been practicing, have them create chants, which will add the concept of repetition to their repertoire. Use another important element of *Three Fish*, **food**, as a topic, and have them create mealtime chants. Possible titles could be Dinnertime Chant, Snack Time Chant, Chinese Food Chant, Burger King Chant, Thanksgiving Chant, etc. The students will create figurative language about their favorite foods.

Ingrid Wendt pointed out that chants are like prayers to the spirit of an object or phenomenon. Begin every sentence in the chant with “May” or “Let.” For an example of a chant see “Seashore” in the Sample Poems from Wendt.

2. Use the biography of Nell Blaine as a springboard to further reading or research about other famous people who faced formidable challenges in achieving their goals.

Sources:

1. Quiller, Stephen, *Painter’s Guide to Color*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1999.
2. Sawin, Martica, *Nell Blaine Her Life and Art*. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1998
3. Wendt, Ingrid, *Starting With Little Things: A Guide to Writing Poetry in the Classroom*. Oregon Arts Foundation, 1983.

Biography of Nell Blaine (adapted from *Nell Blaine her Life and Art* by Martica Sawin)

Throughout her life, Nell Blaine faced many difficulties, but her extraordinary courage, unwavering determination, and artistic talent helped her triumph over many of those challenges. She became one of the leading American painters of the second half of the twentieth century, with fifty-five one-person shows to her credit.

Blaine was born a sickly infant with severely crossed eyes in Richmond, Virginia, on July 10, 1922. Her father Harry Blaine, an angry, hot-tempered man, was still mourning the deaths of his first wife and child at the time of Blaine's birth. Blaine quickly became a victim of his verbal and physical abuse, and she was afraid of him. Blaine's mother Eudora Garrison Blaine, a school teacher, would later tutor little Blaine at home for a whole year when Blaine was too ill to attend school.

Even as an adult, Blaine never forgot an important event that happened when she was two-years-old. That year her parents realized that Blaine was also extremely nearsighted. She was fitted for a pair of eyeglasses, and when she put them on the whole world came into a clear, colorful focus for the first time. She ran delightedly around her yard, naming all the objects she saw. Later in life, Blaine felt that her artistic passion for color, light, and the visual world could be traced to that memorable moment.

Blaine was still frail when she began school and her crossed eyes made her a victim of her classmates' unkind jokes and taunts. She chose to be tough and to fight back in self-protection and even became the protector of other children who were picked on. Thanks to the concern and intervention of Blaine's older cousin Charlotte Spence Clark, Blaine's social life improved when she was thirteen-years-old. Charlotte, who lived in Baltimore, arranged and paid for Blaine to have several corrective eye surgeries at Johns Hopkins Hospital. She spent months with her eyes bandaged, but the surgeries turned her life around and she became an energetic, outstanding student with interests in art, writing, drama, and music during high school.

Blaine's artistic interests developed rapidly. She started drawing when very young and announced her intention of becoming an artist at age five. In high school she took a correspondence course in art and began creating illustrations for the school newspaper and selling portraits of her friends. Blaine's father died when she was a teenager, and, despite very limited family finances, her mother supported Blaine's decision to enroll in the School of Art at the Richmond Professional Institute after Blaine's graduation from high school at age sixteen.

In 1942, at the age of nineteen, Blaine made the most important decision of her life. Encouraged by one of her teachers at the School of Art, she moved to New York City to study at the famous Hans Hofmann School of Fine Art. Blaine's mother had been encouraging of her daughter's art studies, but she strongly opposed Blaine's choice to move to New York. Despite her mother's tears, pleas, and phone call to the dean of the art school, Blaine packed her suitcase, took the ninety dollars she had saved from working at an advertising agency, and boarded the train for New York with Polly Bates, a fellow student at the School of Art.

New York City was becoming the art center of the world in 1942. The events leading to the outbreak of World War II in 1939 had driven the great modern artists out of Europe, with many choosing to immigrate to New York. These famous artists became the teachers and role models for the new generation of American artists. With Europe destroyed by the war, the immigrant artists stayed in America, opened art schools, and helped young American artists, for the first time in history, become the leaders in international art.

Hans Hofmann was one of the immigrant artists. He was born in Germany, studied art in Paris, and immigrated to New York City where he opened his famous school of abstract art in 1934. Nell Blaine got off the train in New York City, went directly to Hans Hofmann School of Fine Art, and walked into his classroom still carrying her suitcase.

Blaine fit quickly into the invigorating, energized New York art scene. She took a job doing commercial design and moved into a loft on West Twenty-first Street. She lived on this street for the next eighteen years, and her loft became the social setting for many gatherings of artists and jazz musicians. Soaking up Hofmann's artistic ideas, she soon became a prominent abstract artist and, at age twenty-two, the youngest member of an important organization called American Abstract Artists. Her energy, zest for life, and sense of destiny made her the center of each organization she joined.

Six months after she arrived in New York, Blaine married Bill Bass, a jazz musician from Brooklyn. Through her husband Bill and her friend Leland Bell, Blaine became deeply interested in jazz. Leland taught her to play the drums. Later, Blaine would say that all that practice holding drumsticks affected the way she used paintbrushes in creating her paintings. The improvising and rhythmic structures Blaine learned from jazz were also transferred to her handling of paint and color in her artwork. Though Bill adored Blaine, he could not match her energy or commitment, and they separated in 1948.

Blaine's trip to France in the spring of 1950 marked another turning point in her artistic style. Although she spent six months in Europe, she saw very few of the great museums and artworks there. Instead she was transfixed by the landscapes, by nature, and by light. Her abstract training with Hofmann had guided her to use a limited range of colors and to focus on the two-dimensional structure of her compositions. Suddenly she wanted to paint nature as directly as possible, to capture the light of each scene with her choice of colors. She painted freely, spontaneously, with distinct brush strokes and used many more colors in each painting. This new style seemed so right and natural to Blaine that it developed quickly and became her style for the rest of her career. Her mature style combined the thoughtful composition of the abstract artist, the rhythm and improvisation she learned from jazz, and the overwhelming appreciation of nature, light and color she developed in France.

Blaine's new style of painting was well received on her return to New York City. Soon her paintings were selling better than at any other time. In the summer of 1958, a writer and a photographer carefully observed Blaine as she painted *Harbor and Green Cloth I* at her studio in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Their article in a magazine called *Art News* recorded her love of color. It explained how Blaine had carefully squeezed out forty-two colors on a clean sheet of plate glass backed with white paper. The colors were neatly arranged, with all the purples on one end, the yellows on the opposite end, and the other color families squeezed out in between. Blaine told the reporter that the color she used most was Prussian Blue.

The following year, 1959, changed Blaine's life forever. In the early winter of that year, she and a group of other New York artists sailed to Egypt, then visited Turkey, and arrived in Delphi, Greece in March. Blaine boated to the Greek island of Mykonos in May to spend a month painting, but was so inspired by the quality of the light in Mykonos, the brilliant white buildings and the sparkling Aegean Sea, that she decided to stay for the summer. She produced numerous watercolors, pastel drawings, and oil paintings during that time, but suddenly began to feel too tired to work. Blaine

had contracted bulbar-spinal polio, a disease that paralyzes all the muscles in the body, including the muscles used for breathing. Just in time she was placed in a special breathing machine called an “iron lung.” Blaine was flown to Athens, then to Germany, and finally home to Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

At first Blaine was not expected to live, but after five months in the “iron lung,” she regained the ability to breathe on her own. She was too weak to walk but learned to use a wheel chair. Blaine’s right arm was so weakened by the disease that she could not lift a paintbrush. When the hospital staff told her she would never paint again, Blaine became angry, cried and then began to fight to regain her strength. Eventually she learned to paint with her left arm and hand, and when she moved into her new apartment on Riverside Drive, she carefully painted her first picture, a small watercolor painting of the view from her apartment window, *Hudson and Ice*.

To resume her life and art career, Blaine needed constant assistance, for she could do very little by herself. Two wonderful women artist friends came to Blaine’s aid. First, Dilys Evans was Blaine’s care giver and chief artistic assistant until 1966, followed by Carolyn Harris from 1966 until 1996. Blaine knew she had to continue her painting, not only for her own emotional well-being, but because it was the only means of supporting herself financially. With Dilys’s and then Carolyn’s loving assistance, as well as that of two full-time helpers, Blaine entered the most productive years of her career.

First, cut flowers were brought inside as subjects for Blaine’s paintings, bringing with them the outdoor color and light that she loved. In the 1960’s, Blaine also developed a passion for portrait painting, using her many devoted friends as subjects. She wanted to capture the life and spirit she saw in their faces, and she painted her friends over and over trying to know them better each time. By 1962-63, opportunities arose for Blaine to resume painting outside in direct response to her beloved nature and light. Finally, she resumed her travels, going to England, France, Portugal, and the Caribbean, finding new inspirations in each locale. The image of a determined, life-affirming artist in a wheelchair facing her canvas and shaded by a large umbrella was a sight seen around the world. She continued showing her work in exhibits, including numerous one-person shows, winning many honors for professional achievement during the 1970’s and 1980’s.

Blaine died on November 14, 1996, after battling cancer and a recurrence of her polio symptoms, known as post-polio syndrome. Blaine’s art never revealed the challenges she faced. For her, painting was a way of celebrating life, creating a symphony of color and form, and giving witness to the many “small miracles of the commonplace.”

Color Discovery Sheet

The color I picked is _____.

What things do you associate with your color? Here is a Discovery Sheet to help you think about the way you personally understand your color. Remember, you are a unique individual, so your ideas may be different than your classmates'. Fill in each category box with all the words that come to mind about your color. Relax and write freely. Later, you can eliminate words and select the ones you think create the strongest images.

Tastes	Smells	Sounds	Textures
Emotions/Moods	Places	People	Seasons/Holidays
Actions/Motions	Animals	Plants, Flowers, Fruits	Vehicles (Cars, motorcycles, etc.)

Stephen Quiller's Associations with Twelve Colors (Quiller, pp. 86-97)

Pure Red-Violet sunset, rubies, rose, fuchsia, berries, magic, vanity, embarrassment, exciting, impulsive, hypnotic	Pure Red-Orange love, alarm, danger, temper, devil, flame, blood, war, passion, fire, strawberry, geranium, Christmas, Valentine's Day, warm, hot, burning, boasting, exciting, aggressive, strong, bold	Pastel Violet heavenly, spiritual, soft, beyond	Darker Violet-Blue memories, sadness, dreams, cold, solemn, calm, serene, soothing, nostalgic
Pastel Blue heavens, snow, light, daybreak, baby boy, faith, diamonds, atmosphere, spiritual, pale, cool, cold, restful	Darker Blue depth, melancholy, darkness, shadows, evening, moonlight, nighttime, dusk, slate, stormy, sadness	Pure Green-Yellow melons, jungle, envy, candy apple, lime, grass, youth, mossy, sour, tart, alive, tropical, renewal, gladness, freshness	Pure Green summer, water, grass, growth, wisdom, peace, nature, life, freedom, Christmas, prosperity, soothing, comfort, tranquility
Pure Yellow sunshine, sun, daffodils, dandelions, light, glory, truth, California, Easter, youth, immortality, warmth, cheerful	Darker Yellow-Orange pumpkin, harvest, late autumn, warmth, Thanksgiving	Pure Orange-Red ambition, love, autumn, blood, sunset, outrageous, primal, bold, warm	Pure Orange-Yellow fire, autumn, poppy, apricot, tangerine, carrot, Halloween, sunset, sun, laughter, happiness, fun, excitement, fantasy, warm

Expanding Vocabulary: Specific Words for Colors

Red - maroon, wine, ruby, vermilion, crimson, cardinal, scarlet, cherry, rose, auburn, pink, coral

Blue - azure, cerulean, cobalt, navy, sapphire, indigo, aqua, aquamarine, ultramarine, turquoise

Green - lime, olive, jade, emerald, chartreuse

Yellow - lemon, canary, gold, ocher, mustard, saffron

Sample Poems (from Wendt)

1. Example of personification:

Fear chews me until
I look like a pancake
with holes in it
Happiness runs and jumps
all over me when I'm
walking home from school

Terre Lowe McCornack

2. Example of variety in line lengths:

The Otter

An otter
slides unnoticed under
the clear icy cold water,
without a trace,
down,
down,
down,
to the bottom.
He finds a shellfish
he comes to the top,
lying on her back
he hits it,
and out pops his supper.
He regards the shell.

DeLynn Coburg

3. Example of a repetition in a chant:

Seashore

Let there be big waves
that look like
hands trying to
grab you.
May there
be giant
sea shells as big
as a whale.
Let there be
big pieces of wood
to make
secret

hideouts.
Let it
be private
so we
won't be
bothered.

Chrissie, Meadow Lark

Sample Finished Color Poem

Green

I know green...
Green is the child of earth and sun
It shines like a youthful athlete
It is tranquility
peace
promise
It slithers through jungles and slides down mountains
It sings like the first day of summer
It tastes like a bite of a June night
It is Ireland
England
Wales
It is fresh-mowed grass tickling my feet
It is a young girl climbing a tree
Green wraps its blanket around the earth
It crowns the springtime
It never forgets us
Green

Nell Blaine Paintings Sampler

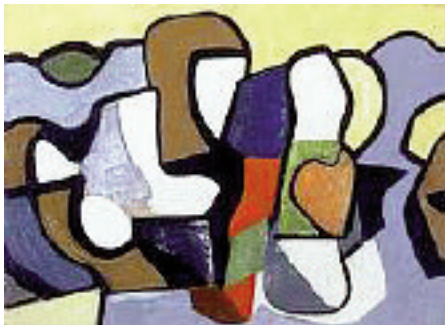
Artistic Development Across a Lifetime

1945

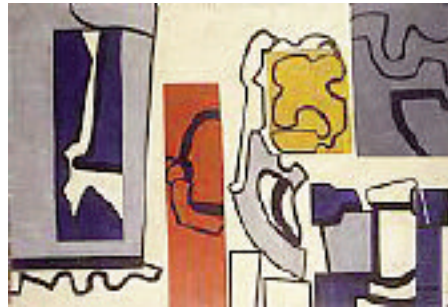


1. Red and Black

1948



4. Abstraction



2. Composition



3. Abstraction (Blue, Red & Yellow)

1950



5. Street Encounter

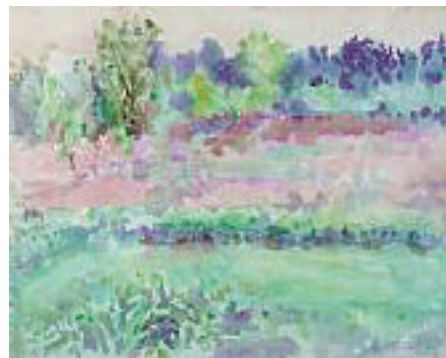


6. Still Life with Pinks

1960



7. Night bouquet



8. The Pink Field

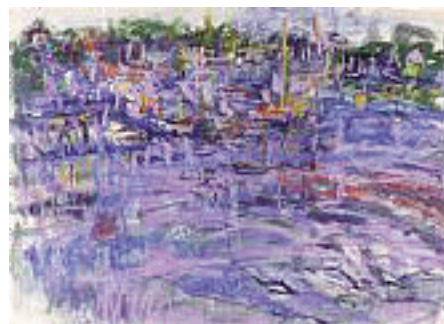


9. a Light Fog

1980s



10. The White Anemone



11. Gloucester Harbor, Dusk



12. First Anemone



The Most Difficult Journey: Abstract Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

September 29, 2004, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

One Cent Life

Sam Francis (1923-1994)

Sam Francis was born in San Mateo, California in 1923 and studied psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. He later took up painting as a hobby while bedridden with tuberculosis in 1941. As a full time artist, Francis traveled all over the world. His favorite places were Paris, Mexico and Tokyo, where he eventually lived. By the 1950s Francis's work had a distinct style; thin paint gracefully dribbled over an unpainted background. The result was bright patches of color blossoming off of a plain white environment. His life in Tokyo in the early 1970s lent simplicity to his work; obvious structure in the form of visual grids covered in paint splatters was the result. Despite the shifts in style, color remained the element of most importance in Francis's work. "Color," he once said, "is light on fire."



Sam Francis (1923-1994), American
One Cent Life
Color lithograph
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1968.003.011.008
© 2004 The Estate of Sam Francis/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

One Cent Life

A lesson plan for *One Cent Life* written by Jennifer Opton

History of Abstract Expressionism and Sam Francis

World War II and the Great Depression opened the door for artists to experiment with their paint and canvas. During those uncertain times there was little demand for art and this enabled artists to try new ways of expressing themselves through painting. This new way of painting was called Abstract Expressionism. Abstract Expressionism was a form of art in which the artist could express himself or herself purely through the use of form and color. It is a form of non-representational art, which means that often there are no concrete objects represented. Abstract Expressionism gave artists a chance to convey the emotion they were feeling during that confusion and uncertainty of the post World War II era.

Sam Francis is one of these artists, although he did not start out as a painter. Francis studied medicine at the University of California at Berkeley and then went to Europe to fight in World War II, where he became ill and was sent home. In 1947, during his recuperation in the hospital he started to paint as a hobby.

Francis is closely connected to the America's Abstract Expressionist Movement but he was also greatly influenced by French and Japanese painting. Francis lived in Paris from 1950 to 1957 and studied with the painter Jean-Paul Riopelle. Upon his return to California he became interested with Japanese mysticism and Eastern philosophy, which had a great affect on his painting. Like many artists of the time, Francis was a painter who relied on color to communicate his emotions. He used the color blue to express both joy and sadness. After 1970, however, his works became bolder; bold stripes were paired with splattered drips and blobs in contrasting colors. You are able to see this style in his piece *One Cent Life*.

Once Cent Life, a color lithograph, is a painting that immediately catches your attention. The contrasting colors pop out at you. Francis uses red, yellow, and blue in a jumble of blobs, splatters, and drops. Francis' use of blank space is also important in this painting. More than half of the canvass is left white. He realized that blank space can be just as important as color. (As a note for teachers, Francis wrote curse phrase on the side of his painting).



Sam Francis at
work



Sam Francis in his studio

This lesson plan is appropriate for fourth and fifth graders and can be modified for many different grade levels.

Objectives:

Art History- Students will be able to identify the time period in American history that Abstract Expressionism was started and the characteristics of Abstract Expressionism.

Art Criticism- Students will be able to compare Abstract Expressionism artwork with other artwork that they are familiar with.

Aesthetics- Students will discuss whether they like Sam Francis' painting and whether they find value in the painting.

Production- Students will create their own abstract painting.

State Core Links:

This lesson covers the four objectives of the visual arts state core:

Making- Students will create their own abstract painting.

Perceiving- Students will view artworks and discuss basic art elements and principles.

Expressing- Students will explore and create meaning in the artwork.

Contextualizing- Students will find meaning in artworks through setting and other modes of learning.

Art History- For homework or in class, students will write half a page about the time period that Abstract Expressionism was started and the movement's characteristics. Each student will write about the two major events that sparked Abstract Expressionism. They should also write about the movement itself. It is a good idea to give the students access to a computer or in an encyclopedia in order for them to research.

Assessment:

Students should be able to identify WWII and the Great Depression as the sparks for Abstract Expressionism. They should also write about what makes a painting abstract.

Rubric for Art History Lesson

History

5 points Full half page about the time period and mention of WW II and the Great Depression.	4 points	3 points Full half page about the time period but mention of either the Great Depression or WW II.	2 points	1 point Less than half a page about no mention about WW II or the Great Depression
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Movement

5 point Full description of elements of AE	4 points	3 points Some description of elements of AE	2 points	1 point Very little said about elements of AE
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Neat Appearance

5 points Very neat and careful cursive	4 points	3 points written in cursive	2 points	1 point Not in cursive and appears very little time was spent
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15 Points in Total

Art Criticism- Students will be able to compare Abstract Expressionist work with other paintings that they might know.

Aesthetics- Students will discuss whether they like Sam Francis' painting and whether they find value in the painting.

Materials- The postcards from this packet and other pieces of art that the students might be familiar with.

Activity- Show the class *One Cent Life*, other Abstract paintings, and other pieces of familiar artwork. Divide the students into groups and have them write down what they think about the abstract art. You might want to ask the following the questions.

- Do the paintings look like anything?
- How do they make you feel?
- Do you like the paintings?

Also show the students other pieces of artwork. Have the students compare the two types of paintings. Ask the following questions.

- Which type of painting do you like more?
- Is one painting better than another?

Have one student from each group present to the rest of the class.

Use the following assessment (give a group grade):

We didn't participate_____

We only came up with a couple of things to say_____

We made thoughtful comments_____

Art Production- Show the students Sam Francis' *One Cent Life* and tell them that they will be making their own piece of abstract art. (This is a good art project for the students who are not good at drawing and painting actual objects.) Tell them that there is no wrong way to paint abstract art. They might want to think about a time that they were really happy and try to paint those emotions. Or you might want to play music and they can paint the music.

Materials:

Art paper
Paint-bright primary colors
Paint brushes
Newspaper
Art aprons

Activity:

Have students spread newspaper over their desks and move away from anything that shouldn't get paint on it. Next have them put on their aprons and hand out one piece of art paper for each student. Show them techniques of splattering the paint using their paint brushes or fingers and how to have bigger splatters by dropping more paint. The students should be encouraged not to actually put their brushes on the paper and paint in the traditional way. Also tell them that empty space can be just as important as painted space. Before they start painting remind them that color is a very important aspect of abstract painting. Ask them what colors convey happiness, sadness, love, anger, joy, and calmness. Tell them to paint a memory or a feeling. Make sure to tell them that the colors they choose are very important to the painting because that is where you get the meaning.

Assessment:

Discuss with the students how they think their paintings should be judged. Since they aren't supposed to look like any object how should they be graded? Is one painting better than the next?

Sources:

www.gallerydelaive.com

Sam Francis." Encyclopedia Britannica. 2004. Encyclopedia Britannica Premium Service.
<"<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=35778>">.

Variations:

- This lesson plan can be varied for many different grade levels. Younger students might just enjoy the painting part of the lesson. This is a great lesson plan for students you might not be very good at drawing and painting actual objects. Every student should be made to feel like an artist and this is a lesson that can do just that.
- This lesson can also be used for students as a creative writing activity. Use the painting as an ink blot test. What do you see in the painting?



The Most Difficult Journey: Abstract Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

September 29, 2004, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Gold Stone, Primary Series



Lee Krasner (1908-1984)

Lenore Krassner was born and grew up in Brooklyn, New York. She attended the Women's Art School at Cooper Union, the Art Students League, and the National Academy of Design from 1926 to 1932. In 1933 she studied with Hans Hofmann and shortly after took a job as a mural painter for the Public Works of Art Project in New York City shortly. Lenore Krassner changed her name to Lee Krasner as her career progressed.

Her art evolved through her series of artwork. She would become bored with a theme, so she would develop a new one, which would signal a new series. Yet each series built on the

Lee Krasner (1908-1984), American
Gold Stone, Primary Series, 1969, edition 56/100
Lithograph on paper
Gift of Dr. Frank J. Hildner
Museum # 1980.114
© 2004 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Photograph by Elizabeth Fimage

last, lending a connected feel to her works. Krasner occasionally worked in collage, using her own paintings as materials.

Her 1969 work *Goldstone*, from her *Primary series* is a lithograph. The print was completed in a phase of immense shapes on an expansive background. Of her work, Krasner stated, "I try to merge the organic with the abstract-whether by means of male or female, spirit and matter, or the need for a totality rather than a separation are questions that I have not defined as yet."

Free the Form

A lesson plan for *Gold Stone, Primary Series* written by Megan Hallett

Objective:

By closely examining Krasner's work and discussing the overtly physical process of media application as used for emotive purposes, students will develop a method for using mark-making in a similar manner to create an expressive visual narrative.

The focus of this lesson plan will be on non-objective expression with methods for producing artwork that reveals expressive content. The goal will be to free the students from the idea that the most successful artwork is the one that is most recognizable or relatable to objects around them.

1. Students will discuss their initial reactions to non-objective artwork prior to any activities.
2. Students will learn the basics of distinguishing non-objective and objective visual imagery.
3. Students will experiment with different types of mark making, and then attribute possible expression to each through a group discussion and game playing.
4. Students will work independently to create a finished work inspired by the Krasner lithograph and the class exploration.
5. Students will examine the results of the process and discuss the effect this procedure has had on the way they view the Krasner work and the effect it might have on their own future artistic projects.

State Core Standards

This lesson plan could be used with minor modifications for 4-8th
Grades 4 Visual Arts, Standards 2 & 3

Materials

Several large sheets of paper or newsprint

Pens

Pencils

Paint or ink

Straws, spritzer bottles, spatulas, unusual "brushes" for paint application

White board or chalk board

Discussion

The discussion sets the stage for the game and art making activity by defining non-objective/objective artwork through comparison, getting general discussions going about preferences within the class, and suggesting that even marks that we don't recognize as "everyday objects" can be emotive and communicate something. Document responses on the board or a piece of paper to compare to post-lesson responses to the same Krasner piece.

1. Ask for initial response.

- To start off ask the class tell you what they see, continue until they have provided a good visual inventory of the artwork.
- Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers, you want to know if they like it or not, why or why not, have they ever made something like it? Does the work “say anything” to the viewer? What is it “about?”
- Ask how the work might have been produced. What physical action might be involved in creating something like this? (Have students physically act out how it might be done.)

2. Compare/contrast to the Nell Blaine artwork.

- Again have the students do a visual inventory of the piece.
- How is the Nell Blaine different from the Lee Krasner artwork?
- Which do they prefer and why? Does the Nell Blaine communicate something different? Does it communicate “better”? How might the physical action in creating the Nell Blaine painting be different? (Once again have them act out how it would look as it was made.)
- Which of the pieces would they be most proud to have made? Why?

3. Use the two postcards to discuss objective vs. non-objective- helpful terms may be “real” or recognizable objects vs. abstraction.

- Write both words on the board and mount the postcards over them
- Discuss that these are two distinct ways of creating an artwork but equally valid and can be used in different ways.
- Point out that both ways of working make “marks,” but Nell Blaine combines her marks to form recognizable objects, the fish, and the Krasner does not.
- Ask, “Can only pictures of things we recognize communicate to us?”

Part 1- Group Activity

This group game is a way to introduce ways of pairing marks with expressive content. Although in a general manner the students are making “marks” for the purposes of the game you may want to narrow down the possibilities of the marks with words like line, pattern or texture, colors, shapes, etc. The emphasis is not on the results on the board, but on the process of how to depict expression or emotion without literally drawing a person crying, laughing, smiling or frowning.

1. Prepare ahead of time a list of types of marks paired with emotions on small pieces of paper. Examples: line and sad, texture and angry, line and happy, line and confused, pattern and calm, color and surprised . . . etc.

2. Fold up the papers and place them in a box.

3. To play the game as a class you will need either large pieces of paper or a white board and colored markers.

4. Stress to the class that there are definitely no right or wrong answers! In order to be fun everyone must work as quickly as possible and not worry too much about what they put on the board. This is a big group experiment.

5. In order to explain the game pull a few of the pieces of paper and model how it works for the class. Ask for feedback as you show them the process to gauge whether or not they are catching on. As different students get the hang of it pick on a student to begin.

- The paper reads “line and happy”

- Read it out loud to the class, walk up to the board and draw your version of a happy line (an easy introductory line might be a curve, like a smile). Explain why your line is happy. Ask for input on if they think your line is in fact happy.
- Repeat this process.
- Draw an angry line, choosing not just a way of drawing the line but a specific color, like red. Describe why your line is angry. Then ask for a volunteer to come up and alter your line into a sad line, either with the way they make the mark or with the color they choose.
- Continue having the class take turns pulling papers and going to the board.
- As the game picks up momentum have the class try to guess what was written on the paper after the student has made a mark.
- When the class guesses correctly have a volunteer come up and whisper in their ear a way to alter the mark. For instance if it was originally a pairing of “calm and pattern”, change it to “pattern and excited”. Have the class guess again.
- If the class is stumped by a student's mark and cannot guess what the paper said, have the student explain their thought processes as they made the mark on the board.

Part 2: Individual Activity

Give the students an opportunity to individually create an artwork using non-objective expression. Encourage the class to engage in the physical process of mark making and to free themselves from the concerns of following a set goal of picture making or storytelling in their artwork.

Tips for facilitating this process:

- Encourage students to engage in the physical process by providing large sheets of paper, cardboard or cloth
- Experiment with unusual methods for applying art materials like using spritzer bottles, spatulas, whisks, blowing through straws, their fingers, or pouring the paint or ink.
- If students have trouble getting started make a list of possible emotions to express. Or ask them to think of their happiest or saddest moment and then which marks and colors might express that.
- Ask, “Have you ever been so excited, happy, or upset that you couldn’t think of words to describe it? Try making an artwork that looks like that feeling.”
- When works are completed ask the students to present them to the group with a few sentences about what they were trying to create, or work as a class to sort them into categories of expressive content and then discuss the visual similarities or differences in each grouping.

Part 3: Assessment

Did students engage in the discussion regarding Krasner’s and Blaine’s artwork?

Did students actively compare and contrast the two artworks?

Did students engage in the game in an active and encouraging way?

Did they complete an individual artwork and make a verbal effort at describing its expressive content?

Final Discussion

- Re-ask the initial questions about Krasner’s work. What is it about? What does it express? How would it be different if the marks were in black, red, blue, etc.?
- Compare the initial responses and see how they differ.
- Discuss how this process might affect future artistic endeavors by the class. Would they like to do work like this in the future? Could they combine some of these elements with other ways of producing art?