“Learning to Look” Teacher’s Handbook
Modern Art
Fox Meadow 2019-2020

Curriculum Overview

LEARNING TO LOOK
FOX MEADOW 2019-2020

CLASS 1 – INTRODUCTION TO MODERN ART

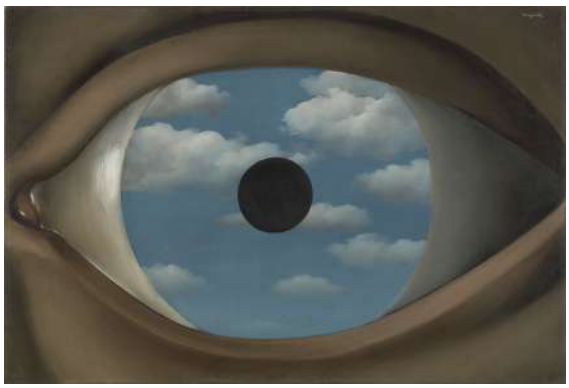
- *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, painted in 1907, by Pablo Picasso
- *Dance (First Version)*, painted in 1910, by Henri Matisse

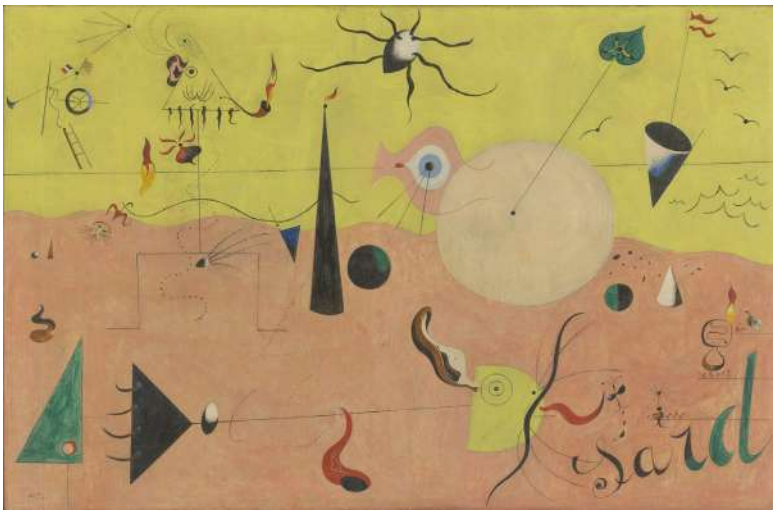
Project Options

- *Cubist Collage*. Cut up various body parts from magazines and bring them to class. Let the children sort through these and glue them onto paper to create their own 'cubist' rendering of a person. Supplies: Volunteers to cut out body parts from magazines (about 10-12 items per child) located in an envelope in the Learning to Look closet, paper and glue-sticks.
- *Geometric Figure Study*. Use the shape stickers from the learning to look supply closet, and have each student creapersite figures and a scene using the geometric shapes. Feel free to have them supplement the artwork with colored pencil and crayons. Supplies: Geometric shape stickers and paper from the Learning to Look closet.

CLASS 2 – SURREALISM

- *The Persistence of Memory*, painted in 1931, by Salvador Dali
- *The False Mirror*, painted in 1928, by Rene Magritte
- *The Hunter*, painted in 1924, by Joan Miro



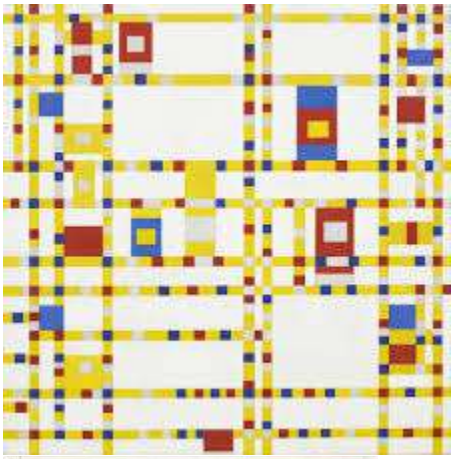


Project Options

- *Draw a Portrait*. Have the children draw a 'portrait' (or even a 'self-portrait') by drawing various symbols of that person about a piece of paper. For example, a drawing of their friend could depict a soccer ball, a piano, a lacrosse stick, and a blue house, or any other items that are significant parts of the person's life. Supplies: Paper and drawing materials.
- *Draw a Dream Scene*. Have the students create a scene from one of their dreams or from their imagination. They can include a far-away place that they have never seen.
  Supplies: Colored pencils and other drawing supplies.

CLASS 3 – ABSTRACT ART – DISCOVERING NEW METHODS OF PAINTING

- *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, painted in 1942-43, by Piet Mondrien
- *One: Number 31, 1950*, painted in 1950, by Jackson Pollack
- *Tutti Frutti*, painted in 1966, by Helen Frankenthaler



Project Options

- *Make a Mondrian*. Cut up in advance red, blue, yellow, paper rectangles of varying sizes. Have the children use the materials to create their own Mondrian-like collages. Supplies: White paper, pre-cut construction paper, glue-sticks.
- *Make a Drip Painting*. Lay plastic garbage bags or brown painters paper on the hallway floor for the children to work on. Mix tempera paint with water (2 tablespoons paint to 1 teaspoon water), mix until it is 'just dripable' and put into plastic cups for the kids to use. Each child will receive one cup with one color of paint. Use 4 different colors of paint so that for every group of 4 students, each student will receive a different color of paint. Cut each piece

of poster board in half. Lay out poster board halves on plastic, one-half piece of poster board for every 4 students. PROJECT: Divide the class into groups of 4 children and direct each group to their own piece of poster board. Give students in each group a cup with a different color of paint and a popsicle stick and/or plastic spoon for dripping the paint. Have the kids spend about 5 - 10 minutes dripping paint as a group onto their poster board. Take photos of the kids working. Leave the artworks to dry. They can be cut later into pieces for the project books. Supplies: poster board, tempera paint, popsicle sticks, plastic spoons, and plastic garbage bags/painters paper (located in the Learning to Look closet). Bring a camera to take photos.

Note: Secure Teacher's permission ahead of time to use the hallway for this project

CLASS 4 – MODERN SCULPTURE

- *Hats Off*, created by Alexander Calder in 1971
- *Reclining Figure*, created by Henry Moore in 1956

Project Options

- *Create wire sculptures inspired by Calder's sculptures, using pipe cleaners*. Try to make an animal using the attached link as a guide. Or you can encourage the kids to make an abstract sculpture, also using pipe cleaners. Supplies: Pipe cleaners from the Learning to Look Closet.
  https://www.guidepatterns.com/tutorials-for-making-pipe-cleaner-animals.php
- *Clay Sculptures*. Have each student use playdoh or model magic to create a sculpture of members of their family. You can demonstrate how to make the head and torso out of simple circles, and how to roll bits of clay between your palms, to make the arms and legs. Have them find a way to link the different figures together. Supplies: Model Magic from the Learning to Look closet. Please be mindful of the amount of model magic used per student.

Class 1. An Introduction to Modern Art

I. Introduction

Introduce yourselves and welcome students to a new year of "Learning to Look." Ask if there are any students who have never had a "Learning to Look" class before. If so, ask some of their classmates to explain what we do together during the four times we meet a year. Stress the importance of *looking*, and of not being afraid to express one's ideas and feelings. Both the viewing and the making of the art should be enjoyable. Plus, everyone will learn a lot!

Take a few minutes at the beginning of class to review the Elements of Art (there are posters in the L2L closet with descriptions)- *color, line, shape, texture, light and space.* You can use this link to give you ideas of what to talk about for each element of art:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art.

This year in Learning to Look, we are looking at modern art.

What does the word "modern" mean?
- New, up to date.
- Current, contemporary.
- Characterizing the present and the immediate past.

A simple definition of modern art is art that is made by artists who lived largely in the 20th Century.

Does anyone know art century we live in? What year is this?
- 2019
- We live in the 21st Century.

Modern art is different from the art that came before it. It has new ideas about what art is and how it should look.

An optional, fun activity you can do with the older students is to ask them what they think of when they hear the word "modern art." Collect the papers and save them. We will do this same exercise at the end of the fourth class to see if we have expanded our comprehension of modern art.

The modern artworks we will be looking at are mostly from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in NYC. This museum was founded in 1929 as the first museum to devote its entire collection to modern artwork. Its holdings date from the 1880s to present day and include many of the most recognizable masterpieces of 20th Century art. This course focuses on outstanding examples of both European and American artists.

Tell students that modern artists deliberately broke with the traditions of the past. They no longer sought to conform to artistic rules and to please patrons, but rather sought to paint their own personal visions. By understanding what was new and radical in the paintings and sculptures we will be looking at, students will develop a better understanding of the meaning of modern art.

Let's start by looking at two very famous artists, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

Painting 1: *Les Demoiselles De Avignon* by Pablo Picasso (1881- 1973)
- Painted in 1907
- Medium- oil on canvas

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)

Picasso is universally acclaimed as the most important painter of the 20th century. During his long productive life, he was an innovator, not only on canvas, but also in sculpture, printmaking and ceramics. His prodigious output and fertile, creative mind ensured that he would dominate the art world at this period in history. The son of a mediocre painter, Pablo Picasso was born in the Andalusian town of Malaga in Southern Spain in 1881. Although a poor academic student, his talent for draftsmanship was apparent as a child. Legend has it that upon seeing his 13-year-old son's painting around 1894, his father handed over his brushes and palette to Pablo and retired from painting. John Richardson, in his biography *A Life of Picasso Volume I*, discounts this story and says that Picasso's father continued to paint, albeit poorly. Picasso himself went to various art academies in the cities where his father taught drawing, first in Corunna, and then in Barcelona. Another legend about Pablo, that he passed all the entrance exams for the La Longa Academy in Barcelona in one day that normally took other students one month to complete, is also an exaggeration according to Richardson. Two years later, Picasso moved to Madrid to study at the art academy there and began to live on his own.

Picasso is one of the modern artists to whom it is impossible to say that he painted the way he did because he lacked the traditional skills for realistic representation. HIs earliest works as a teenager show him capable of painting in a convincingly realistic, academic style. Yet Picasso was never content with staying put. His career is characterized by a number of periods in which

he explored new avenues of creative expression. At the end of the summer of 1900, the artist went to Paris for the first time and was enthralled. As a young Spaniard in turn- of- the- century Paris, Picasso struggled at first to find patrons and earn a living from his artwork. The suicide of his best friend, Casagemas, may have triggered a depression which is reflected in the blue tonality of Picasso's paintings of this time. The Blue Period lasted from 1901 to 1904 and was gradually replaced by the Rose Period (1904-1905) during which his canvases take on a warmer, rosier hue and reflect a happier time in the artist's life. The images of the harlequin, an alter ego for the artist, appears frequently in pictures at this time.

Around 1906, Picasso began exploring a new, radical way of expressing subject matter. The resultant canvas, *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon*, came to be hailed, according to Richardson, "the greatest icon of the modern movement", yet at the time it was created in 1907 almost no one except the artist could see beyond its aggressive savagery to its importance in prefiguring much of subsequent modern art. The painting is often described as the first Cubist picture although critics such as William Rubin (Director Emeritus of MOMA) disagree. Rubin stresses the painting's emotional and expressive power in contrast to the cool geometric abstraction of Picasso's first Cubist works. Nonetheless, by the next year, Picasso and Georges Braque had begun painting figures and landscapes using muted brown and green tones and simple geometric shapes. Subject matter almost disappeared beneath a surface of small cubes. While the Cubist epoch (1908-1914) was gradually replaced by a Neo-Classical phase in the artist's work, Picasso ultimately remained a Cubist his entire career. He continued in his later work the distortions and multiple viewpoints that characterized Cubism without obscuring the image to the same extent. Picasso's art always reflected his own personality, and the people and events that came in contact with him. One of his most powerful canvases, the anti-war painting *Guernica* (193 7) which was painted in response to the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War has become a universal symbol of the horrors of war.

By the time of his death in 1973, the once-poverty-stricken artist had accumulated an estate worth millions of dollars. It included four homes, important paintings and sculptures by other artists, and hundreds of his own works, many of which were given to the French government in lieu of paying inheritance taxes. So much has been written about the artist, especially about his mercurial, misogynistic personality, and his images have become so familiar to us that it is easy to underestimate the extraordinarily original and inventive nature of his genius. Picasso's impact on twentieth century culture remains as strong today as it was during his lifetime.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Please reveal the poster of *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon* and tell them that this picture was painted by Picasso in 1907 when he was living in Paris. He was only 26 years old. It represents a radical change in the artist's way of picturing people.

- What is this a picture of?
    - Five women in various poses with a bowl of fruit on a table in the foreground.

- Do you find this pain ting shocking?
    - Most students will respond negatively to this picture at first.

It seemed like everyone in 1907 found Picasso's Demoiselles shocking too! Even a sophisticated art critic and dealer such as Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler said, "The picture he has painted appeared insane and monstrous to everyone."

- Let's try to figure out what is shocking about this image.
    - Nude bodies!

Yet remind your students that depicting the nude in art goes back to ancient times and was entirely acceptable to audiences so long as the nude figure was somewhat idealized or softened and preferably connected to some historical, literary or mythological subject.

(Picasso's subject matter was highly unorthodox. The title the artist gave to the painting was The Avignon Brothel, and the scene depicts women in a whorehouse. In earlier sketches, the artist even included two male figures, a sailor and a doctor. It is not appropriate, however, to discuss the sexual content of this picture with young children.)

It is not just the nudity that was shocking, it's the way Picasso painted these figures that was totally new to art. Let's look at each of the five women individually and describe how they look. Start on the left.

- What view do we see of the woman on the left?
    - A sideways view.
    - Her head is in profile.

- What does she seem to be doing?
    - She appears to be walking into the scene.
    - Her right leg is extended.
    - She is pulling back a red drapery with her left hand.

- What do you notice about her eye?
    - It's facing front even though her face is in profile.

This way of depicting the eye facing front while the head is to the side was typical of ancient Egyptian sculpture which Picasso saw in the Louvre and may have been the inspiration for this figure.

- Look carefully at the position of the legs of the second figure from the left. Is she standing?
    - Her legs don't seem able to support her.
    - She looks like she's standing like the others but the artist has really shown a view of her as if she were reclining on a bed.
    - Picasso later often used multiple viewpoints in his art.

The two center figures with their arms raised have the most "normal" faces. Picasso said that he was influenced in painting them by ancient Iberian (Spanish) sculptures that he had seen. They have the same bulging oval eyes and large ears.

- Now look at the two figures on the right? Did you notice them before? What's disturbing about them?
    - Their faces.
    - They don't look human.

- What do they look like?
    - Let the students describe them as monsters, witches, animals with snouts, etc.

- What might you wear on your face especially at Halloween time that would hide what you look like?
    - Masks.
    - These two figures seem to be wearing fright masks.
    - These two faces are the most shocking part of the picture.

Picasso himself described how he visited an ethnographic (Natural History) museum while working on this canvas. He was overwhelmed by the power of primitive African masks that he saw there. "They were magic things" which warded off evil, according to the artist (Richardson, p. 24). (Show pictures of African masks if possible.) Picasso then repainted the two figures on the right, giving them distorted, horrifying features.

- Do you think this painting is a portrait?
    - It is difficult to identify who the people are, therefore it is more of a figure painting than a portrait (a likeness).

Yet Picasso once said as a joke that the women represented his girlfriend (mistress) Fernande in several views, a female artist friend Marie Laurencin, and the grandmother of a male friend.

- Do you think these women would have been happy to have been shown this way? What type emotions does this painting make you feel?
    - Anger, meanness, violence, aggression, hostility.

The painting attacks the notion of beauty in art.

- Where are all the figures looking?
    - They stare straight at the viewer.
    - The painting is very confrontational.

What else is it about the way in which Picasso paints these figures that makes them seem so threatening? Let's look at the elements of art for some clues.

- What type lines and shapes does the artist use?
    - Lots of diagonals in both the bodies and the background. The diagonals seem to run into each other and clash. Many things that are rounded in real life are shown as straight lines or triangles {e.g., the knees and breasts).

- Does Picasso show many details? Look at the noses for example. Do they look real or simplified?
    - Simplified.

The artist has treated parts of the bodies as abstract shapes.

- What shape do you use for a nose when you draw?
    - Most students use a triangle.

- Are there many angles in this painting? Point them out.
    - The painting is very angular and sharp. This too makes the figures seem aggressive.

- What color does Picasso use most?
    - A reddish coral.

- Is this a hot or a cool color?
    - A hot color.

- What other colors can you find?
    - Blue, white and black.

Picasso does not use the colorings we would expect.

- How about space? Is the space crowded or open wide?

- Are the figures pushed into the foreground or does the picture suggest space in the background?
    - The figures are cramped together into the foreground of the painting.
    - This makes them look up close, tense, and flat.

- Finally, how does Picasso show light and dark in this painting?
    - Light is indicated by jagged areas of white paint while shadows are made by using hatched strokes, for example on the noses of the two figures at right.
    - The artist does not attempt to reproduce light and shadows realistically.

Another reason this painting was so shocking is its large size (almost 8 feet square). Picasso had painted a picture that would become one of the most famous images of modern art. But it would take the public many years before they began to understand and appreciate the significance of this work.

Painting 2: *The Dance* by Henri Matisse (1869- 1954)

- Painted in 1909
- Medium- oil on canvas

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)

The only artist of the 20th century who can justly lay claim to being Picasso's equal was his friendly rival Henri Matisse. Picasso's innovations in form and space were matched by Matisse's audacities in color and line. At the beginning of this century, these two truly great artists laid the groundwork for the future development of modern art.

Henri Matisse was born in Le Cateau-Cambresis in 1869 to a family of well-to-do shopkeepers. His father had a grain and paint store and his mother, a hatmaker, liked to paint on china. Matisse's parents hoped their son would become a lawyer, and at age 17 the young man went to Paris to study law. Work as a law clerk bored him, however, and he much preferred the art classes he took at daybreak. The story goes that when, as a twenty-year old, he had acute

appendicitis, his mother gave him a paintbox, and he began to paint. It was a revelation, and although his father disapproved of a career as an artist, Matisse from then on devoted himself to his art. His first paintings from 1890 were dark, realistic works which betray little of his future role in the vanguard of modern art. In Paris, Matisse first entered the conservative studio of Bourguereau but failed to pass the entrance exams for the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

Moving to the more relaxed and supportive atmosphere of the Symbolist painter, Gustave Moreau's studio, Matisse learned from copying the Old Masters as well as sketching from life. Moreau recognized that Matisse's gift was to simplify painting. Yet simplicity did not mean easiness or lack of thought. Matisse sought to reject pre-existing imagery and to "look at life with the eyes of a child," the title of a pamphlet he wrote a year before his death.

Gradually Matisse's canvases lightened under the influence of the Impressionists, and he began to develop his own distinctive style. In 1905, Matisse and his friends, the painters Andre Derain and Maurice Vlaminck, gave birth to a new art movement, *Fauvism*. Named by a hostile critic after the French word for "wild beasts," Fauvist art was boldly colored, vigorously painted, and daringly simplified. Matisse's portrait of his wife, The Woman with the Hat, with her bluish-green tinged face, created a sensation at the Salon d'Automne of 1905. By 1908 Fauvism was already eclipsed by the new style of Cubism, but Matisse himself was constantly experimenting with new ways of painting the subjects that most fascinated him, the female figure and the southern French landscape. Fauvism had made Matisse famous, although his art continued to generate controversy especially for its rejection of perspective. The artist traveled widely. Journeys throughout Europe, and to North Africa and the South Pacific inspired Matisse to create in his art light-filled images of calm and sensual beauty. In 1917 the artist took up residence in Nice on the Cote d' Azur, which attracted him, he said, for the "silvery clarity of its light." (Xavier Girard, Matisse· The Wander of Color, Abrams: 1993, p. 105.) For much of the rest of his life he spent summers in Paris and winters in the south of France. Matisse also traveled to the United States where he was overwhelmed by its grand space and intense light.

In 1930, the American art collector, Alfred Barnes commissioned him to create a huge mural on the theme of dance for his art foundation in Pennsylvania. The project consumed three years of Matisse's life and contributed to his increasing ill health.

When Matisse was in his 70s, he began work in earnest on a new form of art, paper cutouts (papier decoupe). Often too ill to leave his bed or later his wheelchair, the artist used scissors to cut out shapes from large pieces of painted paper and then directed his assistants to arrange them on white paper pinned to the wall. By "drawing with scissors," as the artist termed it, he created some of his simplest yet most appealing and lively designs such as those images made for his book Jazz published in 1947 (Antony Masson, Matisse, Barron's: 1995, p. 24). His paper cutouts take to its logical conclusion the artist's preference for painting in flat areas of color without perspective. From 1948 until 1951, Matisse worked heroically on the stained glass windows and wall decorations of the Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence, France. He drew the designs from his bed using a brush attached to a bamboo pole. Three years later a month short of his 85th birthday, Matisse succumbed to a heart attack.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

- Reveal the poster of *Dance (First Version)* to your students and ask them what is going on in this picture. What are the people doing?

- They are holding hands and moving in a circle. Matisse called this painting *The Dance*.

- How many people are in the picture?
  - Five.

- Does this picture remind you of the painting we just looked at, that also has five women in it?
  - Picasso's Les Demoiselles d' Avignon was painted two years before Matisse's Dance (First Version) which was completed in 1909. Yet, Matisse's scene is very different in color, line and mood from Picasso's as we shall see.

- Is this a portrait? Why not?
  - No, because we cannot identify who the people are. They all look about the same.

- What does the blue area represent?
  - The sky

- What is the green area supposed to be?
  - Grass, a hill.

- Would you consider this painting a landscape?
  - Although the people are outdoors, there is nothing distinguishing about the landscape. It too has been extremely simplified into areas of flat color.

- What type of painting is this therefore?
  - This type of painting is called a figure painting. It focuses on the human figure in general, not on one specific person.

- What is it about the way Matisse painted the human figure here that makes it apply to many people, not just to one person?
  - We see very few details that tell what a particular person looks like.
  - We see the faces of only two people and their features are made up of about five lines each.

- Why does Matisse show the figures without clothes? Again think about what the artist's purpose is?
  - Clothes identify specific people, where they come from, who they are.
  - Here the absence of clothes and the simplifying of the figures suggests that they could be anyone. The image is universal.
  - It also suggests the mythical past. Remind students that ancient sculptures were nude.

There's an interesting story about how Matisse conceived the idea; While visiting the French coast near the Spanish border, the artist observed a group of Catalan (Spanish) fishermen dancing the traditional sardana dance in a circle on the beach.

- How has Matisse changed the reality of what he saw into an artistic image?
  - He changed the figures from men to woman, eliminated their clothing or other signs of a specific time and place, and sped up their dance.

He has thus created an emblem of all dance and the desire of all human beings to express their feelings through motion.

- What type of lines make us feel the sense of energy in this work? Point some of them out.
    - Almost all the lines are curved. This suggests movement.

- Do you think that by showing nude rather than clothed figures it is easier to see the lines?
    - Yes, definitely.

- What has Matisse used to make the contour lines of the body stand out?
    - They are outlined in black.
- Does this painting seem to have any depth? Why or why not?
    - This painting lacks depth. The figures seem flat.
    - The ones in the background are about the same size as the ones in the foreground; therefore there is no illusion of distance.

- Can you find any irregular circular shapes?
    - Yes, many of them.
    - The heads, the breasts, the ground, and the shape created by all the joined arms.

- Is this ring of arms broken or unbroken? Look carefully.
    - It's broken.
    - The figure in the bottom center of the canvas is unable to hold onto the hand of the person to her left.

- What feeling does this small detail give us?
    - It's as if the circle is moving so fast that she can't hold on. Ask younger students if they have ever played Ring-around the-Rosy and run so fast that they couldn't hold onto their friend's hand.

- What element of art do you think is most important to this work?
    - Color. It is very vivid- the greens and blues stand out against the bodies of the women.

Tell older students that Matisse was famous for his vibrant colors. At the turn of the century, he belonged to a group of artists known as the Fauves (wild beasts), who spearheaded an artistic movement within Modern art- Fauvism. Fauvism is defined by artists who emphasized the power of pure color in their paintings, and who used vivid colors to represent all types of objects, landscapes, and people, even if an unrealistic depiction. Matisse is considered the father of Fauvism.

- What are the three main colors here?
    - Blue for the sky. Green for the hill. Pink for the bodies.

- Does Matisse apply his paints in a thin manner or a thick manner?
    - Thin

- Can you find areas which are left unpainted?
    - Yes, the canvas shows through in a number of places especially around the bodies. Matisse in fact painted this oil sketch very quickly.

- What is the overall mood of this picture?
    - Joyful, energetic, free, full of life.

Tell older students that Matisse first incorporated this image of dance into the background of a painting called The Joy of Life (1905-06) later that same year. A Russian art collector, Sergei Shchukin, saw this work at the apartment of the American poet Gertrude Stein and decided to commission the artist to create a series of paintings to decorate Shchukin's home in Moscow. Our painting is the first version, a large oil sketch, of the Dance which is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. The second, final version (Dance II), now hangs in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Shchukin planned to commission three works of art from Matisse but accepted only two, Dance (II) and Music, both completed in 1910. If possible show older students a reproduction of Dance (II).

COMPARISON OF THE TWO ARTWORKS:

Let's compare Picassos *Les Demoiselles de Avignon*, with Matisse's *The Dance.*

- What are some similarities between the two artworks?
    - They are both paintings of 5 women, who are gathering in a group.
    - They both show these 5 women in an abstract, expressive manner. Their body parts are not drawn in a realistic manner. Both artists use shapes and lines in a simple way, to depict these women.

There is not a lot of varied color in each artwork. In Matisse's painting he uses primarily 4 colors- green, blue, beige and black. IN Picasso's artwork he uses browns, beige, gray and touches of green and blue. For the subject matter of women, there is not a lot of color variety to depict these women in great detail, like the Renaissance and Old Masters painters would have done.

- What are the differences between the two artworks?
    - Their perspective is different. Matisse's figures appear to be floating above the ground, and none are facing the viewer. Picasso's women are all facing the viewer head on, as though confronting anyone who is looking at them.

The lines of each artwork vary. Matisse uses curved, smooth and softer lines, thus creating a more harmonious and calm image. Picasso's lines are angular, sharp and abrupt, giving this artwork a sense of unease and tension.

Project Options

- *Cubist Collage*. Cut up various body parts from magazines and bring them to class. Let the children sort through these and glue them onto paper to create their own 'cubist' rendering of a person. Supplies: Volunteers to cut out body parts from magazines (about 10-12 items per child) located in an envelope in the Learning to Look closet, paper and glue-sticks.

- *Geometric Figure Study*. Use the shape stickers from the learning to look supply closet, and have each student create figures and a scene using the geometric shapes. Feel free to have them supplement the artwork with colored pencil and crayons. Supplies: Geometric shape stickers and paper from the Learning to Look closet.

Class 2. Surrealism

Surrealism was an artistic movement that was inspired by the French Poet, Andre Breton, in the 1920s, who was heavily influenced by the groundbreaking work in the field of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung.

Surrealism was not defined by an artistic style, but by the desire of artists to explore the unconscious mind, and depict imagery that would evoke a dreamlike state. It means what lies below reality.

This is a good opportunity to speak to the kids about their dreams- some can be very realistic and symbolic, and some can defy logic and laws of nature. There are many ways to interpret dreams; to look for clues and symbols that give us insight into our thoughts, hopes and fears.

Just as dreams can vary wildly from person to person, and from night to night, so can the style of painting by some of the more famous surrealists.

It is important to note the contrast between Miro and Dali, who were peers and heavily influenced by the same thinkers, but whose artwork radically differs from one another.

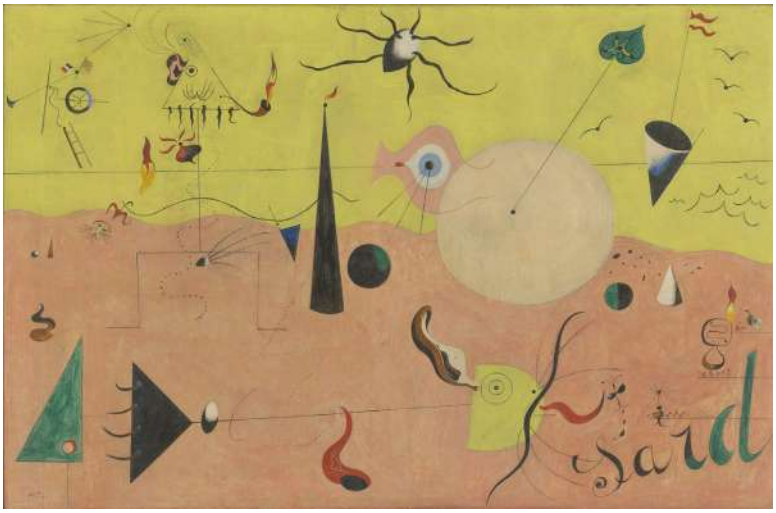
JOAN MIRO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)
Like his compatriot, Picasso, who was twelve years his senior, Joan Miro was one of Spain's great twentieth-century artists. Born in Barcelona in 1893 into a family of artisans--his father was a goldsmith and watchmaker--Miro was strongly influenced by his Catalan heritage. Catalonia is a region in northeast Spain along the Mediterranean coast with a profound sense of its own cultural, linguistic, and historical uniqueness. Miro was a sickly child who spent much time at his grandparents' home in the countryside. He did poorly in school and by age fourteen had convinced his parents to allow him to study art at the La Lonja Art Academy (which Picasso had also attended). His parents continued to insist, however, that Miro study commerce, and in 1910 they apprenticed him to a pharmacist. Deeply unhappy, Miro suffered a nervous breakdown the following year and was sent to recuperate at his parents' newly purchased farm in Montroig, a small Catalan village. Montroig became a spiritual refuge for the artist where he returned periodically during his long career, and which figures prominently in his art. Miro parents' ultimately acquiesced to their son's desire to become an artist, and he enrolled in an art school in Barcelona run by the painter Francese Gali.

Miro's earliest works reveal an interest not only in Cubism, but also in Fauvism and the Orphism of Robert Delaunay. His keen sensitivity to color is apparent in all his canvases. The young painter's first exhibition in Catalonia in 1918 was greeted with derision. Critics and public alike regarded his work as that of a madman, but Miro persevered and gradually developed a personal iconography that was uniquely his own. In March of 1919 he traveled for the first time to Paris. From then until the outbreak of World War II, the artist would divide his time between Paris, Barcelona and Montroig. Paris stimulated him intellectually. In the early 1920s he came in contact with the group of writers and artists known as the Surrealists. The movement, founded by the poet Andre Breton in 1924, called for artists to explore the world of dreams and the subconscious. Miro, who was very poor during his first years in Paris, recalled how his state of semi-starvation induced hallucinations which he incorporated into his art.

By the time of his death at age ninety, he had become world famous. Unfortunately, much of his late work, like that of Chagall, is a simple rehashing of earlier more original creations. Yet he was still capable of producing masterpieces, and some of his late works clearly influenced the development of Abstract Expressionism in New York in the 1950s and 60s.

THE HUNTER, 1924, by Joan Miro



DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Miro was an artist who created his own personal language of symbols. At first his paintings seems to have no subject matter at all. They seem abstract. But if you look carefully and use your imagination, you will see that Miro's art is made up of recognizable images.

Using his own personal language of symbols, Miro shows us a Spanish landscape with a hunter smoking his pipe and waiting for his lunch to be cooked!

What part of this picture do you think represents the sky?

- The top half
- What color is it painted?
- Yellow

Does anyone know what the weather is like in Spain?

- Usually hot and sunny.

Can you understand now why Miro painted the sky yellow not blue.

- To suggest the sun's heat and the brightness of the light.

What symbol might represent the sun here?

- The black, bug-like object with rays in the upper center portion of the painting

Which part is the land and what color is it?
- The bottom half.
- It is terra cotta (orangey-pink), like a sandy beach.

Are the main colors of this painting warm or cool?
- Warm
- They suggest the warm climate of Spain which the artist loved.

Let's see if we can find the hunter who is referred to in the title. Hint: look for a pipe.
On the left is a stick figure of a man smoking a pipe.

Can you find: his beard, his mustache, his hat, his ear, his eye, his fast beating heart, his arms, body and legs?

What is he holding in his two hands? Think what a hunter might have in his hands.
- The right one holds a cone-shaped gun with fire at its tip. The left one holds a rabbit.

Can you find a large blue eye with rays coming out?
- This is Miro's personal symbol. The name Miro in Spanish means "he sees."
- They remind us that art is all about looking, and how the artist sees the world more closely or more imaginatively perhaps than other people.

Now see if you can locate two flags. Do you recognize what country one of them stands for?
In the upper left of the picture are the flags of France and Catalonia. The two flags together symbolize the artist's patriotic feelings both for his homeland of Catalonia, and for the country, France, in which he spent much of his career.

Can you recognize other objects near the flags?
- There is a ladder and a wheel and some lines.

Together they are supposed to be an airplane with its ladder down to let people off. The ladder is another symbol that reappears in other paintings by the artist- it is often referred to as the "ladder of escape."

What other shapes or designs catch your eye?
- Many students are fascinated by the letters.

Can they read the writing on this picture?
- The letters SARD are the first four letters of the word sardine. They may also refer to the word *sardana* which is the name for a Catalon dance.
- In 1923 when this painting was painted, it was a bold and shocking idea to include letters in a picture.

Can you identify anything that looks like a sardine?
- The large fish at the bottom of the canvas.
- Point out its triangular tail, eye, spine, head, eye, ear, and tongue.
- What does the shape just above the letter "d" look like?

It's the grill the hunter will use to cook the sardine. We can even see the flame.
When Miro painted this picture he was very poor and often hungry. Sometimes when people are starving, they see things that aren't there. These are called hallucinations, and the artist has described how he would stare at a blank wall or an empty canvas and imagine things. The large size of the sardine in this scene suggests how important food was to the artist at this time.

Can anyone find a green triangle (lower left)?

- It stands for a grapevine.

Now locate a big circle with something sticking out from it?

- It's supposed to be a carob tree with a leaf.

Look for another flag. This is a Spanish flag. What might it be flying from?

- Lines that suggest birds and waves.
- The cone shaped object is supposed to represent a fisherman's boat.
- This landscape is near the sea.

Have you ever painted a bird in this "shorthand" fashion?

Can you find another cone like the one that stands for a boat?

- It is below it and may be an upside down boat resting on the beach.

What other geometric shapes do you find repeated?

- There are many circles.

SALVADOR DALI

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)

Salvador Dali is often regarded as the quintessential surrealist.
His works display the surrealists' preoccupation with the supernatural and psychological effects. Surrealism, which flourished in Europe between the wars, sought to put on canvas the primitive impulses that Freud tried to understand through the interpretation of dreams. The particular force of Dali's art derives from showing ordinary objects in new and unexpected forms and relationships.
Dali, a Catalan like Miro, was born in Figueras, Spain near the French border. He came into the world nine months ten days after the death of the family's first born son, also named Salvador, and the artist has said that all his eccentricities can be explained as an attempt to distinguish himself from his dead brother. Dali had a precocious gift for art, selling his first canvas at age six. He studied art both in Figueras and then in Madrid where he was a talented but rebellious student. Traveling to Paris in 1928 he became friends with Andre Breton and other members of the Surrealist movement. During the 1930s Dali painted many of the most enduring images of surrealist art, drawing from his subconscious thoughts and dreams to create strange and troubling pictures rendered in a meticulously realistic style.

Dali was a great showman and poseur. He and his wife Gala traveled frequently to America to promote his art. He was always trying to shock people--with his art, his eccentric appearance, or his irrational behavior. He once declared that he received messages from outer space through his mustache. In addition to painting, Dali made films, wrote books, and even designed clothes. By the time of his death at age eighty-four, he had become as famous as his paintings.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

The Persistence of Memory, painted in 1931, by Salvador Dali

Is the mood of this picture the same as Miro's?

- No!

It seems strange, weird, and unpleasant, not amusing and relaxed like Miro's.

Since surrealist artists often rely on dreams for their subject matter, sometimes their paintings reflect nightmares and frightening or eerie visions. In this picture by another Spanish surrealist artist, Salvador Dali, the artist brings together unlikely objects.

What makes this picture so weird?

- The watches.
- The unidentifiable object lying down.
- The contrast between the realistically painted seascape and the illogical objects in it.

Ask your students if they have ever had a dream that included unexpected people and things together which did not or could not happen in real life.

How are the watches in this picture different from watches in real life?

- Three of them are not round and hard.
- They are bent in half. They seem to have melted.
- They seem too big in relation to other things in the picture.

Dali once explained the origin of the idea of soft watches. He said that he had stayed home from the movies with a headache and found himself staring at some runny Camembert cheese. He then thought of the image of the hermit crab which has a hard protective outer shell but is itself very soft.

Dali said this image reflected his own feelings about himself. He created a hard, showy exterior to protect himself from the world. He went into his studio and noticed a canvas of the landscape near Port Lligat that he had been working on. All of a sudden he "saw" two soft watches and added them to the unfinished painting.

What does the object lying down look like? A man in profile with his eyes closed.

- Some art historians see this as a self-portrait of the artist. Dali was easily recognized by his curling mustache.

The figure here seems to have a mustache. Point it out.

As a young boy of six or seven, Dali was taken to see a whale that had washed up on the beach. A photograph that exists of it bears a strong resemblance to Dali's mysterious shape which he used in other paintings as well as this one.

How would you describe the landscape?

- It is barren, empty. The tree is dead.
- There are no living things except the strange figure on the beach.
- There are two rectangular platforms that are unlikely to be found at the seashore.

What does this picture mean?
The artist has left very few clues as to its meaning.

What do watches symbolize?

- The passage of time.

Are these normal watches?

- No. They are limp and soft.

Can you see what are crawling on two of the watches?

- Ants and a fly.

What might they stand for? (Hint: Does anyone remember why 17th century still life painters often included insects in their scenes? What do insects do to flowers?)

- Insects destroy flowers, thus they suggest that nothing lasts forever.

The title of this painting is The Persistence of Memory. Can you explain what that means?

- That memories last.

Here the watches that mark time's passage lose their strength and are attacked by insects, but memory persists. Dali said that when he showed this picture to his wife upon her return from the movies, he asked her if she would forget the image of the watches in three years. She answered that no one would forget the picture once they had seen it. Thus the title The Persistence of Memory. And Dali's wife was right, because the image of soft watches continues to be used in everything from commercials to cartoons.

What size do you think this painting is?

- It's only nine and one half by thirteen inches. That's not much bigger than this page.

Are you surprised? Why do you think Dali made this picture so small?

There is no one answer to this question.
Perhaps the small size really encourages people to look carefully.
Or perhaps the small size makes the image even more powerful and intense.

RENE MAGRITTE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)
René Magritte was born in Belgium, in 1898. He was the oldest son of Léopold Magritte, a tailor and textile merchant, and Régina, who committed suicide by drowning herself in the River Sambre in 1912. This was not her first attempt at taking her own life; she had made many over a number of years, driving her husband Léopold to lock her into her bedroom. One day she escaped, and was missing for days. Supposedly, when his mother was found, her dress was covering her face, an image that has been suggested as the source of several of Magritte's paintings in 1927–1928 of people with cloth obscuring their faces, including *Les Amants*

Magritte's earliest paintings, which date from about 1915, were Impressionistic in style. From December 1920 until September 1921, Magritte served in the Belgian infantry in the Flemish town of Beverlo near Leopoldsburg. In 1922, Magritte married Georgette Berger, whom he had met as a child in 1913. Also during 1922, the poet Marcel Lecomte showed Magritte a reproduction of Giorgio de Chirico's "The Song of Love" (painted in 1914). The work brought Magritte to tears; he described this as "one of the most moving moments of my life: my eyes *saw* thought for the first time."

In 1922–1923, Magritte worked as a draughtsman in a wallpaper factory, and was a poster and advertisement designer until 1926, when a contract with Galerie Le Centaure in Brussels made it possible for him to paint full-time. In 1926, Magritte produced his first surreal painting, *The Lost Jockey* (*Le jockey perdu*), and held his first solo exhibition in Brussels in 1927. Critics heaped abuse on the exhibition.

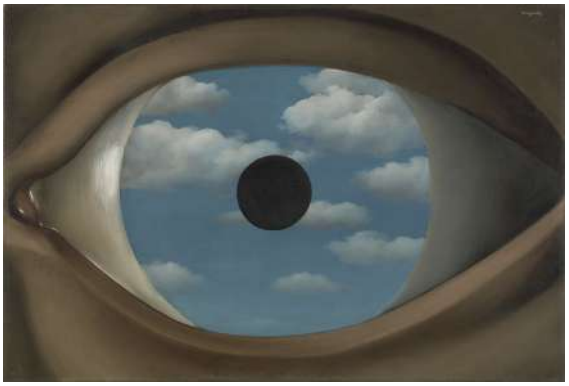
Depressed by the failure, he moved to Paris where he became friends with André Breton and became involved in the Surrealist group. An illusionistic, dream-like quality is characteristic of Magritte's version of Surrealism.

Having made little impact in Paris, Magritte returned to Brussels in 1930 and resumed working in advertising He and his brother, Paul, formed an agency which earned him a living wage. In 1932, Magritte joined the Communist Party, which he would periodically leave and rejoin for several years. In 1936 he had his first solo exhibition in the United States at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, followed by an exposition at the London Gallery in 1938.

Magritte's work frequently displays a collection of ordinary objects in an unusual context, giving new meanings to familiar things. The use of objects as other than what they seem is typified in his painting, *The Treachery of Images* (*La trahison des images*), which shows a pipe that looks as though it is a model for a tobacco store advertisement. Magritte painted below the pipe "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" ("This is not a pipe"), which seems a contradiction, but is actually true: the painting is not a pipe, it is an *image* of a pipe.

Magritte's constant play with reality and illusion has been attributed to the early death of his mother. Psychoanalysts who have examined bereaved children have hypothesized that Magritte's back and forth play with reality and illusion reflects his "constant shifting back and forth from what he wishes to what he knows'.

THE FALSE MIRROR, painted in 1928, by Rene Magritte



What are we looking at?

- A close up of an eye with the iris depicting clouds in the sky.

Is it a realistic painting of an eye? Notice what Magritte has chosen to include and to omit:

- Eyelids, inner eye, pupil, but not eyelashes or iris.

What are the main colors in the image?

- Blue, White, Black and Beige

Is the texture consistent throughout the image?

- No- the eye is glassy and 3-D, the sky is soft and recessed and the black pupil is neither reflective, nor 3D- just a flat, black dot.

What does a mirror do?

- It reflects an image.

Which part of this painting is a reflection?

- If the sky was being reflected in the eye, it would be in the foreground of the painting, floating above the iris and the pupil. The black pupil in the foreground implies that this is not actually a reflection of the sky in the eye.
- Also- the sky can also be interpreted as a reflection of light.

Magritte was inspired by Giorgio de Chirico's "The Song of Love", saying "my eyes *saw* thought for the first time". How can this painting be a representation of that?

- We are looking beyond the eye and potentially into the mind and thought.

If surrealists are concerned with the world of dreams and subconscious- why are sky and clouds important symbols?

- The sky is infinite, and we often look at clouds and our subconscious sees imagery in the clouds.
- This is a daytime sky, and when we dream, it is usually when we sleep at night. And our eyes are closed. This bridges that space between our dreams and our reality.

How does this painting make you feel?

Project Options

- *Draw a Portrait*. Have the children draw a 'portrait' (or even a 'self-portrait') by drawing various symbols of that person about a piece of paper. For example, a drawing of their friend could depict a soccer ball, a piano, a lacrosse stick, and a blue house, or any other items that are significant parts of the person's life. Supplies: Paper and drawing materials.
- *Draw a Dream Scene*. Have the students create a scene from one of their dreams or from their imagination. They can include a far-away place that they have never seen.
  Supplies: Colored pencils and other drawing supplies.

Class 3. Introduction to Abstract Art

What do you see when you look around you? Name some things.

- Objects, people, pictures, scenes, trees, sky, earth etc.

What if I asked you to look at just lines, shapes, and colors? Can you create a picture of just these elements of art?

- Yes.

Would it look like any recognizable object? Would it have any subject matter that you could identify?

- No.

Would a picture of just lines, shapes, and colors be a portrait? a landscape? a still life? a narrative painting?

- No.

Then would it be a new type of art that we have never seen before in a Learning to Look class?

- Yes!

This type of art is called abstract art. It does not try to represent people, places or things in the real world. In earlier Learning to Look classes this year, we noticed how many modern artists tend to simplify and flatten the images they paint. Today, we are going to look at the works of three artists who paint abstractly. They each came up with their own way of making art.

Tell older students that many people regard the creation of abstract art, an art without recognizable subject matter, as the most important contribution of modern art.

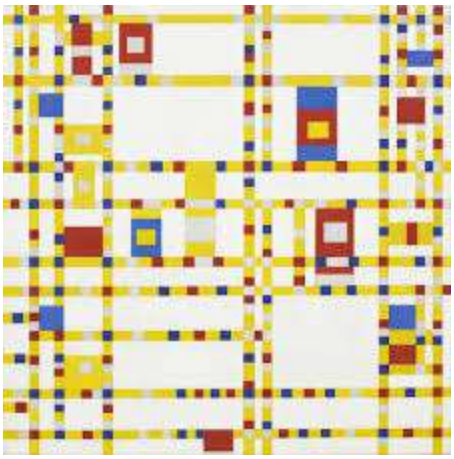
Why do you think 20th century artists moved away from painting pictures or making sculptures of identifiable subjects?

- They wanted to create something new, something completely different from earlier art.

With the invention of the camera, it was no longer necessary for artists to record reality, to depict what things really looked like.

Twentieth-century artists rejected the traditional rules of art such as perspective. Thus they were free to express themselves any way they wished with any materials they chose.

1. ***Broadway Boogie Woogie*** **painted in 1942 to 1943 by Piet Mondrian**



BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)
Piet Mondrian was one of a group of artists in Holland who sought to reduce naturalistic forms to their essential elements and thus arrive at abstraction. The group, known as De Stijl ("The Style") was founded by Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg in 1917 and had as its guiding principles the use of only straight lines and right angles as well as only the primary colors in addition to white, black and gray. This severely restricted painting style was labeled Neo-Plasticism. Mondrian adhered to its aesthetic tenets for the rest of his life.

Pieter Cornelis Mondrian was born in 1872 in Amersfoort, Holland, the son of a primary school headmaster. As a teenager, he studied to become an elementary school art teacher. Exhibits of his own works beginning in 1890 were so well-received, however, that he determined to become a professional artist. He took art classes for several years at the Rijks Academie in Amsterdam, but failed to win the Dutch Prix de Rome because of weakness in his figure drawing. His earliest works of the 1890s are naturalistic floral still lives and figure paintings in the symbolist mode. It was as a landscape painter, however, that Mondrian set forth on his path to abstraction. For most of the first decade of the 20th century, Mondrian painted realistic representations of his native Dutch landscape with its low horizon and flat land. Gradually his landscapes become more and more reduced and monochromatic.

By 1912 he had moved to Paris and came under the influence of Cubism. He adopted the Cubists' neutral, muted coloration and breakup of the surface into geometric shapes. A contemporary description of the painter by Apollinaire notes that "Mondrian descends from the cubists, but does not imitate them. This cubism--very abstract--follows a different path from Braque and Picasso. Unlike Cubism's founders who retained an interest in volume, Mondrian emphasized the flatness and frontal quality of his motifs.

The advent of World War I found the artist stranded back in Holland where he spent the remainder of the war years continuing to paint and exhibit his works. Discussions with van Doesburg led to the publication of a new journal, De Stijl, in 1917 which gave voice to their radical theories about art. Between 1917 and 1919 Mondrian's work became entirely abstract. His canvases were composed of an abstract grid of horizontals and verticals that divide the picture into many unequal rectangles. At first their colors were pastel and quiet. Following his return to Paris in 1919, however, the artist

adopted a bolder color scheme, using planes of primary colors, planes of "non-colors" (white, black, and gray) and black lines. By severely restricting the content of his work to essentials, he hoped to arrive at universal statements without subjectivity. In his many articles and pamphlets on abstract art, he also described a future in which art was integrated into the fabric of society.

Mondrian spent from 1940 until his death in 1944 in New York City to escape the danger and devastation of World War II. He loved the energy and excitement of New York life and enjoyed the company of other expatriate artists. Yet he remained always somewhat solitary. His art, while exhibited to critical acclaim, never achieved wide popularity. He died of pneumonia at the age of seventy-one. Nonetheless, his bold, reductive vision exerted a powerful influence not only on other artists, but also on modern architecture, furniture and fashion design.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Show students the poster of Broadway Boogie Woogie and tell them that it was painted in 1944 by a Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian, who eventually fled Europe to live in New York City during World War II.
Does anyone know what Broadway is?

- It is an avenue in New York City on the West Side that is famous for its traffic, theaters, and neon signs.

What about "boogie woogie." What's that?

- It's a jazzy piece of blues piano music with a strong rythmic beat (eighth notes in quadruple time).

Mondrian loved jazz. When he first came to America in 1940, a friend of his introduced him to boogie woogie music which the artist found "Enormous, enormous!" Mondrian liked to go to cafes where he would dance to the boogie woogie music. He also played records of the music while painting in his studio.

Tell older students that Mondrian compared the way he painted to the way boogie woogie music was composed. "True Boogie Woogie I conceive as homogeneous in intention with mine in painting: destruction of melody which is the equivalent of destruction of natural appearance; and construction through the continuous opposition of pure means--dynamic rhythm.

Is this painting abstract or representational?

- Abstract.

What is it made up of?

- Lots of colored squares and rectangles.

Why do you think Mondrian entitled this painting Broadway Boogie Woogie? Is there something about the design that reminds you of a New York City street?

- It looks like a grid of streets crossing each other. The red squares remind us of red lights.
- The larger shapes suggest buildings.
- The yellow suggests the bright lights of a city.
- The large number of these little blocks suggest the activity of city life.

What is it about this painting that is like boogie woogie music?

- It seems busy and full of energy like jazzy dance music. The way the squares alternate with one another creates a strong rhythm.

Does it seem as if Mondrian painted this picture quickly?

- Most students will probably say yes.

Actually it took him about a year to complete it.
He studied and reworked various parts of the canvas to achieve exactly the balance of color and line that he was seeking. While in America, he discovered an easier way to lay out his composition on canvas by means of strips of adhesive tape which he could easily lift up and rearrange.

Even though this is an abstract painting, does it create a mood? Is it quiet or agitated? soft or loud? Active or still?

- The mood of this painting is active, even agitated, energetic, loud, and busy.

Now let's look closely at how Mondrian arranged the elements of art to evoke this mood. We'll also get an idea as to why he needed time to paint his works.
First, let's look at how he arranged the colors in this picture. How many colors does he use?

- Three (excluding white)

Name them.

- Red, yellow, and blue.

What do we call these three colors?

- The primary colors.

They are the colors from which all other colors can be created.

For most of his career, Mondrian limited himself to using only red, yellow, and blue (the primaries) and black, white and gray (the "non-colors).

Which color stands out the most?

- The red

Which color makes the painting seem to glow with light?

- The yellow

The way the yellows are arranged makes them seem to flicker like lights flashing on and off.

- Mondrian's whites also seem to shine.

Is this a bright or a dull painting?

- A bright painting.

Mondrian's use of bold primary colors influenced younger abstract artists.

How else did he limit himself in his art? Hint: what type lines does he use?

- Straight lines.

Since around 1917 Mondrian used only straight line in his works.

In Broadway Boogie Woogie which was one of the last two paintings Mondrian created, he made a dramatic change in his art. Look at an earlier Mondrian canvas. What color are the lines?

- Solid black

Now look at this picture. What are the lines made up of?

- The lines are actually made up of colored shapes.

Tell older students that Mondrian was one of the founders of a movement in art called De Stijl, which challenged artists to create a pure art composed of a limited color palette and straight lines that intersect at right angles.
What type of shapes do these lines form?

- Squares and rectangles.

What shape is the canvas itself?

- A perfect square, 4 feet 2 inches x 4 feet 2 inches.

Does any one thing stand out in this picture? Does Mondrian direct us to look at any one part of this painting first the way a portrait painter might?

- No, there is no central focus. All parts of the painting are given equal importance. This is a very modern trait.

What about how the artist balances his composition. Is this a symmetrical or asymmetrical design? Ask younger children if they folded the painting in half, would each half echo the other?

- This is an asymmetrical composition.

Can you see how Mondrian achieves a dynamic or energetic balance in this composition?

- There are more large rectangular shapes on the left of center than on the right but those on the right are bigger.
- Most of the largest rectangles are along a band at the center. The bands are closest together at the right and left sides of the canvas.

Mondrian was interested in how the proportions of each element relate to the other elements and to the whole.

Does this picture have a frame?

- No.

Mondrian was one of the first artists to develop a way to hang his stretched canvases without a frame by means of a mount which moves the paintings forward from the wall.

How does eliminating the frame emphasize the painting's flatness?

- A picture frame is almost like looking out a window.
- It frames a view and thus increases the sense of depth. Without a frame, Mondrian forces the viewer to see a flat surface on which paint has been applied.

This is a very modern notion of art.

All of Mondrian's artistic choices help to create a work that is colorful, full of excitement, and pulsating with rhythm, just like a busy street in New York City or a jazzy dance.

2. ***One: Number 31, 1950*** **painted in 1950 by Jackson Pollack**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)
The American artist Jackson Pollock is the most famous believer in Abstract Expressionism, an art movement which originated in post-war New York City (hence its other name, The New York School) and encompassed artists who expressed themselves abstractly in large-scale, dramatic works. Divided into two groups, "Color-field" Painting and Action Painting, Abstract Expressionism is characterized by a sense of freedom from traditional artistic rules as well as an emphasis on the process of painting itself.

Pollock was born in Cody, Wyoming in 1912. The youngest of five brothers, Jackson and his family moved frequently in search of a better life. In 1928 they settled in Los Angeles where Pollock attended the Manual Arts High School. He was expelled for writing a paper that criticized the school's overemphasis on athletics at the expense of academics! The next year he was expelled again after punching his coach in a confrontation over the teenager's eccentric clothing and non-conformist behavior. Pollock's oldest brother, Charles, was already an aspiring artist studying in New York, and Jackson, with his mother's encouragement, soon decided to follow in his brother's footsteps. In the fall of 1930, Pollock moved to New York to study at the Art Students League with American Regionalist artist, Thomas Hart Benton.

Pollock's first works from the 1930s reflect Benton's influence in their subject matter, scenes from American life, and in the expressive quality of their rhythmic lines. Yet Pollock was not a naturally-gifted draftsman. As he wrote to Charles in 1930, "My drawing, I will tell you frankly is rotten. It seems to lack freedom and rhythm. It is cold and lifeless. It isn't worth the postage to send it." For over a decade he labored to perfect his drawing. His early awkwardness is evident in his three oldest extant sketchbooks from 1937 to 1941, which were on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in a revelatory exhibit in the fall of 1997.The sketchbooks show him copying the Old Masters and being fascinated by the work of the Mexican muralists, Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Pollock's interest in the art and culture of Native Americans that he was acquainted with from growing up in the West is also apparent. Exposure to European surrealists with their emphasis on painting the unconscious, as well as the work of Picasso, gradually led the artist away from Benton's stylistic influence. By the early 40s, Pollock was producing brightly colored canvases which depicted primitive myths as well as personal symbols culled from his own dreams and memories, in a highly abstracted although still objective manner. The main figures were difficult to discern because Pollock painted over them with lines and symbols in an attempt, as he put it, "to veil the image."

Pollock failed to achieve any commercial success with his paintings for most of his career. He was very poor and lived for much of the 1930s with his brother. During that decade he was employed by the WPA, and when that support ended in 1943, he became a janitor at the Guggenheim Museum.

Throughout his adult life, Pollock struggled with alcoholism and mental illness. He entered Jungian psychoanalysis in 1939, but never stayed in therapy for very long. In 1941 he began a stormy relationship with the painter Lee Krasner whom he married in 1945.

In the late 40s, Pollock made a break-through that would have major repercussions on the development of modern art. He abandoned representation entirely to concentrate on the act of painting itself. His famous "drip" canvases challenged the notion of what art is. Time Magazine in 1956 dubbed Pollock, "Jack the Dripper." In place of the traditional method of applying oil paints with a brush, he substituted ordinary house paint and industrial aluminum paint that he splattered, tossed, and drizzled onto huge unprimed canvases pinned to the floor of his studio on Long Island. The artist's movements as he circled the canvas and threw paint at it with the force of his entire musculature became an essential element of the finished picture. For Pollock, his works were "energy made visible." Brush marks alone without subject matter become expressive of the artist's mood, personality and technique. Pollock gave birth to the art of gesture. Unfortunately, the artist's life ended prematurely. He died in a car crash in 1956 which some regard as suicide. He was despondent over his inability to work and had begun drinking heavily again. Pollock's art seemed for many to mimic the violence and destructiveness in his life. He himself encouraged the notion that modern artists work from within when he said, "Painting is self-discovery. Every good artist paints what he is." There is an originality of vision and tremendous labor involved in Pollock's creations.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Display the poster of Pollock's painting and ask students what they think.

- "Wow! Is this different from Mondrian."
- Some will say that this isn't painting, or that it looks like a mess. Others will say it looks like a child did it.

Allow students time to express their first reactions. Then ask them if this picture too is an example of abstract art?

- Yes.
- You can't recognize any objects.

Of what does this painting remind you?

- Something dribbling.
- Splattered paint like what's left on a drop cloth.

Pollock called this type of painting, which he produced in the last ten years of his life, "drip" painting.

Can you guess how Pollock painted this work? Look carefully at it. Hint: Where did he place the canvas?

- On the floor!

Pollock rejected the traditional way of painting using brushes, oil paints, and a canvas set on an easel. Instead he placed a clean, unstretched piece of canvas on the floor of his studio. He then poured, dripped and splattered paint over it using sticks, the handle end of the brush, and even syringes. He never actually touched the canvas with a brush.

What size do you think most of Pollock's drip paintings were?

- Very large. This painting is 8 feet 10 inches by 17 feet 6 inches.

Many of his paintings are as large as a school blackboard or whiteboard.

Our particular example of Pollock's work is called One: Number 31 and was painted in 1950.

What shapes did the artist's body make while he was painting? Try to pretend that you are the artist at work.

- His body was constantly in motion.
- He walked around and around the image and his whole body became involved in the act of painting.
- He twisted and bent, making large arcs and strong diagonals as he splattered the paint.

That's why Pollock called his type of painting "Action Painting. He described how he could "work from the four sides and literally be in the painting.

Do you think it is easy to paint this way? Do you think Pollock painted quickly or slowly?
It's not easy to paint this way if you want to control where the paint falls.
Pollock spent hours looking at a painting and planning his next move.
The image did not happen by accident.
It was not painted wildly without concern for design.

Let's look at how Pollock uses the elements of art to appreciate even more how much control it took to guide the direction of the drips and to make them various thicknesses and shapes.
What element of art stands out the most in this picture?

- Lines!

Let's describe the quality of these lines. Are there mostly straight or curved?

- The lines are curved and straight.

Are there only a few lines or is there a mass of lines?

- There are many lines.

They seem all entangled with one another.
They cover the entire canvas, creating an all-over pattern.
The overall result of interlacing liquid lines of paint is balanced and offset by puddles of muted colors and by allover splattering.

Do all of these curving, overlapping lines appear still or full of movement?

- Full of movement and energy.
- The repetition of the lines creates a sense of rhythm.

How would you describe the colors Pollock uses here? Name all the colors you find.

- Black, white, gray.

Are these bright or somber colors? Are there many primary colors?

- The colors are dark and somber.
- The strong contrast between black and white adds to the image's power.

How does Pollock deal with space in this picture? Is there much empty, or negative space here?

- Yes, in the background.
- However, the painting seems dense, filled up with paint.

What about depth in space. Does this image seem flat or three- dimensional?

- Flat.

But do some lines seem to come forward and others go back (recede)? Why?

- Pollock used overlapping of his layers of paint to create a suggestion of shallow space in this picture.

What do you think this painting would feel like? What is its texture?

- The picture would feel rough and bumpy from the different the dense layers of paint.
- Pollock emphasizes the texture of the paint itself which is applied thickly here.

Do your eyes focus on any one point in this picture?

- No.

Pollock deliberately spread the colors and lines evenly so as to eliminate one focal point.
This equal emphasis on all parts of the canvas makes our eyes move around it.
It adds to the action.

If you could step inside this painting, what would it feel like? (Children's comments here are particularly telling.)

- As if lost in a maze, bewildered, chaotic, wild.
- As if caught in a spider web with thousands of strings. As if whirling around in a dream/ nightmare.

Even though this painting doesn't tell a story, depict a scene, describe a person, or reproduce what we see around us, does it still convey a mood or feeling?

- The answer to this question will of course vary with each individual.
- Most everyone will feel a tremendous sense of energy. Pollock called his paintings "energy made visible." Some will feel something edgy, nervous, intense, even frightening about this picture.
- Others will sense the painting's great freedom, motion, wildness and exuberance.

Pollock described his art as "an energetic adventure for the eye." He believed his art expressed the universal desires and emotions that all people feel.

***Tutti Frutti* painted in 1966 by Helen Frankenthaler**

H**elen Frankenthaler** (December 12, 1928 – December 27, 2011)

Helen Frankenthaler was born on December 12, 1928 in New York City. Her father was Alfred Frankenthaler, a respected New York State Supreme Court judge. Her mother, Martha (Lowenstein), had emigrated with her family from Germany to the United States. Growing up on Manhattan's Upper East Side, Frankenthaler absorbed the privileged background of a cultured and progressive Jewish intellectual family that encouraged all three daughters to prepare themselves for professional careers.

Frankenthaler studied at the Dalton School under muralist Rufino Tamayo and also at Bennington College in Vermont. While at Bennington College, Frankenthaler studied under the direction of Paul Feeley, who is credited with helping her understand pictorial composition, as well as influencing her early cubist-derived style. Upon her graduation in 1949, she studied privately with Australian-born painter Wallace Harrison, and with Hans Hofmann in 1950. She was later married to fellow artist Robert Motherwell (1915–1991), from 1958 until they divorced in 1971. Both born of wealthy parents, the pair was known as "the golden couple" and noted for their lavish entertaining. She gained from him two stepdaughters, Jeannie Motherwell and Lise Motherwell.

As an active painter for nearly six decades, Frankenthaler went through a variety of phases and stylistic shifts. Initially associated with abstract expressionism because of her focus on forms latent in nature, Frankenthaler is identified with the use of fluid shapes, abstract masses, and lyrical gestures. She made use of large formats on which she painted, generally, simplified abstract compositions. Her style is notable in its emphasis on spontaneity, as Frankenthaler herself stated, "A really good picture looks as if it's happened at once."

Frankenthaler's official artistic career was launched in 1952 with the exhibition of *Mountains and Sea*. Throughout the 1950s, her works tended to be centered compositions, meaning the majority of the pictorial incident took place in the middle of the canvas itself, while the edges were of little consequence to the compositional whole. In 1957, Frankenthaler began to experiment with linear shapes and more organic, sun-like, rounded forms in her works. In the 1960s, her style shifted towards the exploration of symmetrical paintings, as she began to place strips of colors near the

edges of her paintings, thus involving the edges as a part of the compositional whole. With this shift in composition came a general simplification of Frankenthaler's style. She began to make use of single stains and blots of solid color against white backgrounds, often in the form of geometric shapes. Beginning in 1963, Frankenthaler began to use acrylic paints rather than oil paints because they allowed for both opacity and sharpness when put on the canvas. By the 1970s, she had done away with the soak stain technique entirely, preferring thicker paint. Throughout the 1970s, Frankenthaler explored the joining of areas of the canvas through the use of modulated hues, and experimented with large, abstract forms. Her work in the 1980s was characterized as much calmer, with its use of muted colors and relaxed brushwork.

Frankenthaler's technique was very new and it is what we will discuss today. She often painted onto unprimed canvas with oil paints that she heavily diluted with turpentine, a technique that she named "soak stain." This allowed for the colors to soak directly into the canvas, creating a liquefied, translucent effect that strongly resembled watercolor. Soak stain was also said to be the ultimate fusing of image and canvas, drawing attention to the flatness of the painting itself. The major disadvantage of this method, however, is that the oil in the paints will eventually cause the canvas to discolor and rot away. The technique was adopted by many other artists. Frankenthaler often worked by laying her canvas out on the floor, a technique inspired by Jackson Pollock.

Her work has been the subject of several retrospective exhibitions, including a 1989 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and been exhibited worldwide since the 1950s. Her work is represented in institutional collections worldwide. In 2001, she was awarded the National Medal of Arts.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Display the poster of Frankenthaler's painting and ask students what they think.

- "Wow! Is this different from Mondrian and the Pollack."
- Some will say that the paint looks different than on other paintings, thinner.

Explain that Helen Frankenthaler pioneered a unique "soak-stain" technique, which was initially inspired by the work of Jackson Pollock. She departed from Pollock's style by thinning her paint and pouring it onto bare canvas, allowing it to soak in and fuse with the surface in ways only partially under her control.

Allow students time to express their first reactions. Then ask them if this picture too is an example of abstract art?

- Yes.
- You can't recognize any objects.

Of what does this painting remind you?

- Ice cream.
- Frankenthaler called the areas where her colors met "well-ordered collisions." In this painting, those collisions are particularly luminous, and Frankenthaler named the work Tutti-Fruitti after a kind of confection, such as ice cream, that mixes numerous brightly colored fruit flavors.

Do you think it is easy to paint this way?

- It's not easy to paint this way.

Frankenthaler spent a lot of time contemplating her work.
It was not painted wildly without concern for design. However, she did like to create her work all at once. She said, "A really good picture looks as if it's happened at once. It's an immediate image. For

my own work, when a picture looks labored and overworked, and you can read in it—well, she did this and then she did that, and then she did that—there is something in it that has not got to do with beautiful art to me. And I usually throw these out, though I think very often it takes ten of those over-labored efforts to produce one really beautiful wrist motion that is synchronized with your head and heart, and you have it, and therefore it looks as if it were born in a minute."

What element of art stands out the most in this picture?

- Color!

Color covers almost the entire canvas.
The overall result of vivid colors meshing together is quite dramatic.

Do all of these colors appear still or full of movement?

- Full of movement and energy.

The collision of forms creates a sense of dripping movement.

How would you describe the colors Frankenthaler uses here? Name all the colors you find.

- Blue, green, yellow, gray, muted red, or magenta.

Are these bright or somber colors? Are there many primary colors?

- The colors are bright and alive.
- There are some primary colors, but not all are primary.

How does Frankenthaler deal with space in this picture? Is there much empty, or negative space here?

- Yes, a little bit of empty space. The empty space looks very similar to the dripped pigment.

The painting seems dense, and filled up with paint, similar to Pollock's work.

Do your eyes focus on any one point in this picture?

- No.
- The emphasis on all parts of the canvas makes our eyes move around it.

It adds to our absorbing the entire canvas at once.

If you could step inside this painting, what would it feel like?

- Calm, fluffy, like in a cloud.
- As if whirling around in fluffy cloud of colorful paint.
- As if you jumped into a bowl of delicious fruity ice cream.

Even though this painting doesn't tell a story, depict a scene, describe a person, or reproduce what we see around us, does it still convey a mood or feeling?

- The answer to this question will hopefully be yes!
- The fields of color are visually exciting and interesting.

Now that we know that this painting was creating using an entirely new way of working with paint, it makes us see the painting in a new light.
By developing her innovative "soak-stain" technique while still in her early twenties, Helen Frankenthaler secured her place in the art world forever.

Project Options:

1. Make a Mondrian. Cut up in advance red, blue, yellow, paper rectangles of varying sizes. Have the children use the materials to create their own Mondrian-like collages.

Supplies: White paper, pre-cut construction paper, glue-sticks.

2. Make a Drip Painting. Lay plastic garbage bags or brown painter's paper on the hallway floor for the children to work on. Mix tempera paint with water (2 tablespoons paint to 1 teaspoon water), mix until it is 'just dripable' and put into plastic cups for the kids to use. Each child will receive one cup with one color of paint. Use 4 different colors of paint so that for every group of 4 students, each student will receive a different color of paint. Cut each piece of poster board in half. Lay out poster board halves on plastic, one-half piece of poster board for every 4 students. PROJECT: Divide the class into groups of 4 children and direct each group to their own piece of poster board. Give students in each group a cup with a different color of paint and a popsicle stick and/or plastic spoon for dripping the paint. Have the kids spend about 5 - 10 minutes dripping paint as a group onto their poster board. Take photos of the kids working. Leave the artworks to dry. They can be cut later into pieces for the project books.

NOTE: Secure teacher's permission ahead of time to use the hallway for this project.

SUPPLIES: Poster board, tempera paint, popsicle sticks, plastic spoons, and plastic garbage

bags/painter's paper (located in the Learning to Look closet). Bring a camera to take photos.'

Class 4. Modern Sculpture

I. Introduction

Children love sculpture! Many of them have made clay sculptures at home and in school. Today's class focuses on two works by modern sculptors, Alexander Calder and Henry Moore. Before looking at their works, it is helpful to review some of the properties of sculpture in general with younger children or those who are new to the *Learning to Look* program as follows:

- Gather about five to seven examples of sculptures made from stone, wood, clay, metal, or plastic, etc. from your home, around the school, or from the local high school art room. Hold up one of the sculptures you have brought in and ask the students if they know the term for this kind of artwork?
    - The response is usually "a statute."

- Introduce the term "sculpture" and ask in what ways sculpture differs from the paintings we have been studying. (It helps to write new vocabulary on the blackboard.)

  Usual responses:
    - Sculpture is not flat.
    - Sculpture has depth.
    - Sculpture has three dimensions.

- Can you walk around a painting and see it from all sides?
    - No.

- Can you walk around most sculptures?
    - Yes. The French sculptor, Rodin, once said that a sculpture is a painting with a thousand facets.

- What is the one thing that a painting has which a sculpture does not need?
    - A Frame.

- What else is different?
    - Sculptures are made of different materials. The tools used to make them are different.

- Display the pieces of stone, wood, metal, and clay sculpture as well as a constructed work (i.e., tinker toys or legos) that you have collected beforehand. Then use them to illustrate the three primary processes of sculpture.

    - Cut away (subtraction) process - the carving or chiseling process used with wood or stone sculptures. The artist begins with a piece of wood or stone and cuts away what is not needed until the finished sculpture emerges.
    - Build-up (addition) process - the process used with clay, plaster, and wax sculptures whereby the sculptor builds up the form bit by bit.

    - Construct process - the assembly of parts often used with metal or plastic sculptures.
    - Casting - the method of shaping a sculpture by pouring a liquid substance into a mold and allowing it to solidify.

- Have sculpting tools available for each process, if possible, and demonstrate how they are used. (These can usually be borrowed from the high school art teacher.)

- What tool do you always have with you that is useful when sculpting in clay or wax?
    - Your hands.

Now point out the ways in which sculpture and painting are alike.

- Does sculpture have texture?
    - Yes

Let students touch sculptures of different materials to feel the natural grain as well as the textured surfaces applied by the artist.
(It is most convenient with younger children to have the teacher retain possession of each object while walking it from student to student. This speeds up the activity and helps to keep the class under control.)

Place your examples of sculpture on a table around which the students can walk.

- Does sculpture have shape?
    - Yes.

Suggest that students walk around the sculpture, viewing it from different angles.

- Does sculpture have line?
    - Yes. Notice the overall directional lines of the sculpture as well as any lines the artist has carved into the surface.

- Does sculpture have light?
    - Yes. Point out the reflections of light on metal, glass, and polished marble.
- Does sculpture have color?
    - Yes.
- Both the color inherent in the materials and sometimes applied colors.

- Does sculpture occupy space?
    - Yes. It occupies three-dimensional space.

All of the same elements of art used by an artist in painting are also found in sculpture.

MODELING WITH CLAY ACTIVITY

Clay is a wonderful tool to communicate the difficult concepts of relief sculpture, and positive and negative space, as well as the question of support in a sculpture.

Relief Sculpture

Give each student a clay board and a small handful of clay. Ask them to flatten it like a pancake. Explain that each student is a sculptor and shall sculpt or create a face out of clay. Remind them to keep the clay flat and work on only one side in this activity. Have different clay tools available, such as toothpicks, pencils, etc., for gouging out eyes or simulating hair texture.

- Is your face flat or do some parts stick out? Which ones?
    - The nose, brows, cheekbones, lips, chin.

Demonstrate the "building up" process with small bits of clay to create these parts, if the students have not already done this themselves.

- As the students exhibit their wonderful variety of faces, ask if these works of art have three dimensions?
    - Yes. They have height, width and depth.

But instead of being a sculpture that we can walk around and view from all angles, there is one surface or side that is flat and unfinished. This kind of sculpture is called **relief sculpture**. It is not free-standing and relates more to a painting in that it has a background.

- Can anyone guess what the name is for the sculpture that we can walk all around?
    - Sculpture in the round.

- Who can name a common relief sculpture that we carry in our pockets every day?
    - Coins. They are actually two relief sculptures back to back.

Positive and Negative Space

Now ask the students to roll up their relief sculptures into a ball.
(Some of them will be disappointed to destroy their clay faces. Remind them that we are learning with clay today, not making finished pieces of art. Encourage them, however, to repeat some of these activities at home where they can preserve their favorite creations more easily.)

- What shape are you holding?
    - A sphere.
    - Younger children may say a circle or a ball.
    - Introduce older pupils to the concept of three-dimensional shapes, i.e. sphere, cube, cone, pyramid, etc.
- One definition of sculpture is a shape in space.
- Now make a hole through the center of the sphere. What shape do we have? (Hint: what does this shape remind you of that is something to eat?)
    - A doughnut.

The hole is important to the shape of this sculpture. This hole or empty space is called **negative space**. The solid part of the doughnut or filled space is called **positive space**.

- Standing with your feet slightly apart and your hands on your hips, ask the students to pretend you are a piece of sculpture and to identify the positive and negative space.
    - The spaces between your arms, your legs, and your fingers.
    -

Students love to find even more negative spaces, e.g., nostrils, the space between the hair and shoulders (in someone with long hair), the space between heel and floor (in someone wearing high-heeled shoes).

Supporting and Positioning Sculpture

Now direct your students to roll the clay between their palms to make a snake. Hold the clay in the air.

- Is this a sculpture in the round?
    - Yes.

Now ask them to stand the snake on its tail. As the snake collapses, it is demonstrated that the proper support and positioning of a sculpture is crucial.

- How can you arrange this snake in an interesting way?
    - Usually a wide variety of poses ensue, some using supports, some that are coiled.

(Remind the children if necessary that they might want to utilize their toothpicks as a support.)

- Older or more experienced students can begin this class with a quick recapping of some of the characteristics of modern painting as follows:

Let's see if we can summarize some of the trends we have found in 20th century painting:

- Many artists simplified, flattened or distorted the objects they painted.
- Paintings got more and more abstract until some paintings had no recognizable subject matter at all.
- Artists emphasized the importance of expressing their own feelings, thoughts, and interpretations, more than following any set of rules as to how a painting should look.
- Many artists experimented with new materials and new ways of painting.
- In today's class we are going to look at two examples of modern sculpture. Do you think we'll find some of the same trends in the sculpture of the 20th century as we discovered in its painting? Let's take a look and find out!

II. Eye Exercises

Every Learning to Look art class begins with eye exercises which help to refresh the students' eyes and focus them on the task at hand. The exercises mark a beginning to the session and quiet the group in order to prepare them for concentrated looking.

- Open your eyes wide like owls.
- Shut them tightly like mice.
- Look up to the ceiling, down to the floor, up to the ceiling, down to the floor. Do not move your head!
- Moving only your eyes, look to the right, look to the left, to the right, to the left.
- Close your eyes and place your fingertips lightly on your eyelids. RELAX. (During this time the teacher reveals the first work of art to be studied).
- Open your eyes: you are now ready to look!

III. Calder

- *Hats Off*, created by Alexander Calder in 1971, using sheet metal, bolts and paint. 31 feet tall. Located at the Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Gardens in Purchase.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)

Alexander (Sandy) Calder was born in Philadelphia in 1898 into a family of artists. His mother was a painter and his father and grandfather were sculptors. As children, Calder and his sister Peggy loved to make their own toys, and in his twenties, he even worked briefly in a woodworking company making Toddler Toys. There is an element of playfulness in all his art. At first, Calder planned to become an engineer. He received his BS in mechanical engineering from Stevens Institute of Technology in 1919. He was also a gifted mathematician. As a young man, he took a series of diverse jobs from logger to ship's fireman until he decided that his true vocation was art. He enrolled at the Art Students League in New York City in 1923, and three years later published his first book (Animal Sketching). Later in 1926, he traveled to Paris where he set himself up in a small studio. There he began work on his famous wire circus which revealed not only his ability as a sculptor, but also his sparkling wit and creative imagination. Calder gave performances of his miniature circus with its toy acrobats, trapeze artists and animals made of wire, wood and cloth. (The circus is now part of the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.)

Avant-garde artists and writers of the time soon flocked to Calder's studio, and the artist's career was set. He continued to give special shows of his circus both in America and abroad throughout his career. Many of his later works were inspired by ideas and images first created for the circus. Also in Paris in the early 1930s, Calder developed his hanging wire sculptures. He had already begun to experiment with handdirected movement with his circus. Now he used his engineering training to create balanced, suspended sculptures that moved freely. According to the artist, it was after a visit to Mondrian's studio in 1930 that he decided he wanted to work in the abstract. He envisioned Mondrian's stable rectangles and imagined "How fine it would be if everything moved." (Barbara Rose, American Art Since 1900, p. 247).

When Calder first exhibited his "mobiles" in Paris in 1932, no one had ever seen a brightly colored moving metal sculpture before. It was something totally new. The French artist Marcel Duchamp coined the name "mobile" to describe the sculpture's unique ability to move on its own. Like the Surrealists, Calder was fascinated by the element of chance inherent in a sculpture that constantly changed shape according to the direction of the air currents. His abstracted shapes reflect not only Mondrian's geometry, but also the biomorphic forms of Hans Arp and Miro. Many of his mobiles suggest objects from nature such as fish, animals, or leaves. Calder was especially fond of animals. In the late 1930s Calder's art took a new turn. He began creating small painted sheet metal constructions that did not move. These "stabiles" evolved over time into the monumental sculptures of the 1950s and 1960s which were often placed outdoors in city parks, at corporate headquarters, or in sculpture gardens. Calder married in 1931 and had two daughters. His permanent homes were in Roxbury, Connecticut and Sache, France. The artist was interested in all art forms, and in addition to creating paintings and sculpture, also illustrated ten books, designed theater sets and costumes, decorated interiors, and designed jewelry, rugs, and wall hangings. Calder was the first American sculptor to gain international recognition.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Many 20th century artists were interested in depicting movement in their art.

- What 20th century inventions can you think of that enabled people to travel at much greater speed than ever before in history?
    - Car, plane, jet, helicopter, motorcycle, speed boat, space shuttle.

The American artist, Alexander Calder, was actually the first to make a sculpture that moved: a mobile. Later in his career, he made a stabile. But his subject pertains to motion: people removing their hats in "Hats Off". Reveal poster of "Hats Off".

- What materials has Calder used to create this sculpture?
    - Sheet metal, bolts and paint. These are new, 20th century materials.

- How has Calder added color to his sculpture?
    - He has painted the metal.

Calder said, You have to paint the steel anyway, to protect it, so why paint it gray, why not paint it red?" (Greenberg & Jordan, The Sculptor's Eye, page 80).

- Are the materials he used heavy as stone or relatively light?
    - Relatively light.

- Aluminum is an excellent material for a stabile because it is light yet strong. The artist can cut it with heavy scissors.

Let's focus now on the lines, shapes, and space of this mobile.

- Are there any perfectly straight lines in this sculpture?
  - No.

- What type lines are there?
  - Curved lines.

- What type space does this sculpture occupy? Is it two-dimensional or three-dimensional?
  - Three-dimensional

It has height, width and depth, like our bodies but unlike paintings.

Calder believed art should be amusing. He even constructed a circus of wire animals and performers. (Show photographs if possible.) He once said, "I just want to make things that are fun to look at." (Jean Lipman, Calder Creatures, Great and Small, p. 7) Does his art make you smile?

IV. Moore

- *Reclining Figure*, created by Henry Moore in 1956, cast in bronze in 1961. 8 feet long
- Located at the Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Gardens in Purchase.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (for the teacher)

Henry Moore, the most important British sculptor of the 20th century, was born in 1898 in Castleford, Yorkshire, the seventh of eight children. His strict father, who worked in the coal mines, believed that everything was possible through hard work. He had high hopes for his children. At age ten, Henry informed his father that he wanted to be a sculptor. His father responded that he should

learn to support himself first. Moore obeyed by becoming a teacher. He never relinquished his artistic aspirations, however, and after fighting in World War I, he entered Leeds School of Art on a government scholarship. In 1921 he studied sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London. Moore dated the beginning of his fascination with bones to this period in his life. The College was next door to the Natural History Museum, and Moore began to be intrigued by the various shapes of bones there.

At age 30 Moore had his first one-man exhibition in London as a sculptor. The next year he married the Russian painter Irina Raderzsky. Their daughter Mary, an only child, was born in 1946. From 1932 until 1939 he was the head of the sculpture department at the Chelsea School of Art and continued to exhibit his works in England to growing acclaim. During World War II, Moore, who was appointed an official war artist, became famous for his many drawings of people taking shelter at night in the underground (subway) stations to escape from the German bombings. He also made sketches of future sculptures using white chalk on the black paper that darkened peoples' windows to prevent detection by enemy aircraft.

In 1940, he and his wife moved to an old house, Hoglands, in Hertfordshire, after his London studio had been damaged in an air raid. The home was believed to have once been a butcher shop, and both he and his wife constantly unearthed bones while digging and planting in the garden. Moore would put them on shelves in his studio. The biomorphic shapes of bones and other found objects played a formative role in Moore's art as did exposure to primitive sculpture. The British sculptor was also influenced by his French predecessor, Rodin, who sculpted body parts and presented them as complete sculptures. Moore wanted to liberate sculpture from the confines of realistic representation. His work disregards anatomical correctness, yet most of it is clearly based on the female form. Moore is also well-known for his many sculptures of family groups. He was one of the first to emphasize the importance of allowing the material itself dictate the form and nature of the resulting sculpture.

Moore remained productive over the long span of his sixty-year career. His sculpture captures the essence or spirit of things and expresses his deepest feelings about life and the human condition.

DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS (for classroom presentation)

Now let's take a look at another sculpture. Show students the slide (poster) of Reclining Figure without revealing its title.

- Can you easily identify this sculpture? What is it of?
    - A reclining figure.

The name of this sculpture is Reclining Figure. It was made by one of the most famous British sculptors of the 20th century, Henry Moore.

- What material do you think this sculpture is made of?
    - Bronze

- How big do you think our finished sculpture is?
    - It's larger than life? It's about 8' long.

- Is this an identifiable person? Do we know who she is?
    - No.
- Why not?

    - Because the artist has simplified her features.
- Can you see her face?
    - It is possible to see face, but it is not realistic. The eyes are round circles, the nose a triangle and the mouth a simple slit.
- Where do you find negative space in this sculpture?
    - Between her arms and her torso. Between her legs and the platform.

- What other simple shapes can you find?
    - Circles (head, eyes)
    - Rectangles and triangles (legs, arms, negative space)

Moore reduced his sculptures to simple shapes. He liked to collect bones, pebbles, and other natural shapes that he found while walking in the fields or digging in his garden. He would put his found objects on a shelf in his studio and look at them while creating his sculptures.

This expressive bronze, with its mottled green patina, is typical of his work from the 1940s and '50s, and reflects his renewed interest in surface texture and solid form. Capturing the physicality of the human body without succumbing to exacting realism, Moore exaggerates the woman's relaxed pose and the shape and relative sizes of her limbs, head, and torso.

- How important are reflections of light to this sculpture? Point out some reflections.
    - The bronze reflects the light depending upon where it is shining.

- The heads, shoulders and knees reflect the light when it is overhead.
    - The light makes the sculpture seem to shine.

Moore liked to see his sculptures out-of-doors in natural light. He though sculpture was an art of open air with the sky as background. This Reclining Figure is exhibited outside in the sculpture garden of Pepsico.

<u>Project Options</u>

- *Create wire sculptures inspired by Calder's sculptures, using pipe cleaners.* Try to make an animal using the attached link as a guide. Or you can encourage the kids to make an abstract sculpture, also using pipe cleaners. Supplies: Pipe cleaners from the Learning to Look Closet.
  https://www.guidepatterns.com/tutorials-for-making-pipe-cleaner-animals.php
- *Clay Sculptures*. Have each student use playdoh or model magic to create a sculpture of members of their family. You can demonstrate how to make the head and torso out of simple circles, and how to roll bits of clay between your palms, to make the arms and legs. Have them find a way to link the different figures together. <u>Supplies</u>: Model Magic from the Learning to Look closet. Please be mindful of the amount of model magic used per student.
- *Take Pictures* of either project for use in the year-end binder for each student.