



Foster Elementary

PTA - Art Masterpiece - 2nd Grade

Art Masterpiece

2nd Grade Projects

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October Project

Thanksgiving Food Collection Box

The project will consist of decorating a box that will be placed inside each classroom for the collection of canned goods for the fall community service project benefitting Society of Saint Stephens.

Goal: To get the class to work together to come up with a theme and ideas on how to decorate your class box. Complete the project in class and show students how they can work together on a project.

Example: Box decorated as a turkey. Divide class into groups and have each group work on a body part. One group can paint and assemble the head, another, the body, another, the wings, another, the legs and the last group can create a poster with a slogan. "Flocking together to Feed our Friends in Need"

Supplies: The boxes will be supplied for the project. Any art supplies that in the art masterpiece cabinets on the bottom can be used as well as the butcher paper that is in the work area in the back half of the teachers lounge.

Theme ideas: could be...

Helping hands working together... Have the class put their handprints around the box with various pictures of people helping one another.

A Thanksgiving theme ...where each child puts something he or she is thankful for on the box.

A fall theme... with leaves and fall items around the box.

A school spirit ...theme with Foster bulldogs on the box.

Have fun with the kids on this and let them "own" the project!

Boxes should be displayed inside the classroom due to fire hazard in hallways.

This project will help the students feel more involved in the giving process and help them appreciate the difference they are making in the lives of people who are less fortunate in our community.

Boxes have been placed in the supply area..one per classroom.

For examples, please click on the photo gallery tab above!



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November Project

Totem Pole

QUESTIONS:

1. Does anyone know what this is a picture of? (Totem Pole)
2. What are Totem Poles? (A Native Americans Art that either tells about the family or a special story)
3. What are Totem Poles made of? (carved from large tree trunks)
4. Totem Poles use symbols to tell their stories. Can you think of any symbols? (The American Flag - Freedom, Spike the Bulldog - Foster and school spirit)

SUMMARY:

Totem Poles are tall, carved posts that were created by important men in the Native American Tribes of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. The carved and painted faces on a pole represented the animals or people in the story they wanted to tell. The faces were either a representation of an actual animal or person or were symbolic.

Totem Poles either told of a family's history like scrapbooks do today or they tell a story about a significant happening.

ART:

Students will create Totem Poles that tell about themselves. Hand out copies of symbols and have them pick their favorites/the symbols that best represent them. Ex. mouse - shy, an owl wise, a fox - clever.

Materials:

Empty toilet paper rolls (paint with brown paint in advance to make them look more like wood)
Markers
Feathers
Scissors
Construction paper - optional
Glue

Have the students select the animals that represent something about their personality. Color the faces, cut them out and glue the faces onto the pole. They can add feathers for decoration and may color the pole to add decoration.



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* PAINT THE TOILET PAPER TUBES BROWN PRIOR TO THE CLASS TO SAVE TIME.

Totem Pole



Native American

INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking and impressive indigenous art forms of North America is the Totem Pole. Its sheer height with intriguing variety of colorful animals, people and shapes has defined much of the cultural landscape of the Pacific North West from Oregon to Alaska.

HISTORY

What exactly is a Totem Pole? It varies with every linguistic group and from village to village. If you were to paddle up a river or go along a coastline prior to European contact, you would have seen different styles and animals represented at almost every stop. To the European Eye, the Haida are the most naturalistic, the Kwakiutl the most flamboyant while the Bella Cooola poles make great use of a heavenly blue dye. To the early explorers and later missionaries these were either representations of pagan gods or stories. While the meaning and function of the Totem Pole is varied, some were similar to a European family crest. They told the story of a particular family. Many also depicted legends in a condensed form.



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ANALYSIS

If a Totem Pole told a story, it would have the main characters displayed or carved into the pole. For example, if we were to make a totem pole of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, we would have the head of a young blond girl, a small baby bear and two full size bears. By looking at a pole like this, the viewer would recall the story. If you look at the totem pole pictured here, it tells of the story of how the raven stole the sun from the sky giant and brought light to the world.

RELATION

How can any of this help you as an artist? All artists work with images, myths and stories of their culture. Many artists use symbols whether it's a dog to symbolize faithfulness or a Campbell's soup can to represent the everyday commercial products we consume in life.

Children love Totem Poles and intuitively understand their meaning. They enjoy making their own with boxes and tubes. Totem poles are inspirational and many artists have borrowed the ideas from Totem Pole art to create and shape their own artistic interpretations.

STUDIO ACTIVITY

Use graphic symbols to create a story on your own hand made Totem Pole.



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December Project

“Autumn Leaves on the Tsutaya River”

QUESTIONS:

1. What is happening in this picture? (people are working, people are crossing a bridge)
2. Do the people in this picture look like you and me? Do they dress like us? (no)
3. Does the bridge look like anything you’ve seen in Houston? (no)
4. How does this artist use line? Which ways do the lines go? (the lines divide the painting into sections – above the bridge and below the bridge, lines create the water waves, and angled lines form the hay stacks)
5. Where are the people walking to? (any answer)
6. Where does your eye travel with the artists use of line? (back and forth across the bridge and opposite direction with the flow of the water)
7. What time of the year do you think it is? (summer – fans and hats protect the people from the sunshine)
8. What country do you think this painting takes place in? (Japan)

SUMMARY:

Japanese art influenced the art world strongly at the turn of the century. This print was done by Hokusai on a block of wood and then printed. It was during the 19th century! Notice in the top right hand corner the printing. At 6 years of age the artist began painting and was taught to write, with a brush, the phonetic sounds of his language. It takes a year to learn this or to commit this to memory.

ART: “Simple Print Making”

Materials:

foam plates with the rims cut off
manila or white paper
pencil
paint (green, red, white, blue, yellow, black)
foam roller
tape
sticks for engraving



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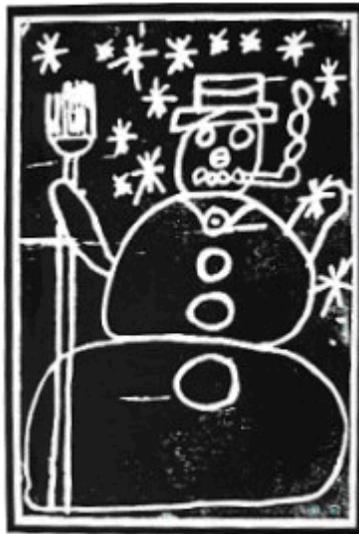
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Procedures:

Follow print making directions below. Students may want to create Christmas or winter scenes. Remember, the lines that the students push into the plates are negative lines, rather they appear as the paper color. The depressed lines are called “engraving lines”. This is what will print as the paper color.

If time permits, allow students to trade plates and make more than one print. Even layering one print on top of another can make an interesting design.

Simple Print Making Instructions



Let it Snow! – A foam print by Jessica, printed with blank ink on white paper

1. Use a foam plate with edge cut off. Tape to desk to keep from moving.
2. Then draw a design into the foam with a stick provided for engraving. Press firmly to make a nice impression. Make lines and dots, patterns and decorations. If you include letters, you will have to make them backwards, because your final print will be a mirror image of the design you draw.
3. Use a brayer (paint roller) to roll a thin layer of tempera paint onto the foam. You want to cover the flat surface, but not the lines you have drawn into the foam. The lines should stay clean and have no ink or paint in them, so don't press too hard or use too much paint.
4. Place a sheet of manila or white paper on top of the inky foam and press gently but firmly to transfer the ink onto the paper. Lift the paper off and admire your design. You can print over and over again....make lots of designs and use them as cards or pictures to give to all of your friends.



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Katsushika Hokusai



Hokusai – Autumn Maple Leaves On The Tsutaya River

Autumn Maple Leaves on the Tsutaya River

Hokusai was born on the 23rd day of 9th month of the 10th year of the Hōreki period (October or November 1760) to an artisan family, in the Katsushika district of Edo, Japan. His childhood name was Tokitarō. It is believed his father was the mirror-maker Nakajima Ise, who produced mirrors for the shogun. Hokusai began painting around the age of six, possibly learning the art from his father, whose work on mirrors also included the painting of designs around the mirrors.

Hokusai was known by at least 30 names during his lifetime. Although the use of multiple names was a common practice of Japanese artists of the time, the numbers of names he used far exceeds that of any other major Japanese artist. Hokusai's name changes are so frequent, and so often related to changes in his artistic production and style, that they are useful for breaking his life up into periods.

At the age of 12, he was sent by his father to work in a bookshop and lending library, a popular type of institution in Japanese cities, where reading books made from wood-cut blocks was a popular entertainment of the middle and upper classes. At 14, he became an apprentice to a wood-carver, where he worked until the age of 18, whereupon he was accepted into the studio of



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Katsukawa Shunshō. Shunshō was an artist of ukiyo-e, a style of wood block prints and paintings that Hokusai would master, and head of the so-called Katsukawa school.

"Autumn Maples Leaves on the Tsutaya River" is one of his wood block paintings. This painting shows his complete mastery of the art.

Works and influences

Hokusai had a long career, but he produced most of his important work after age 60. His most popular work is the ukiyo-e series Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji, which was created between 1826 and 1833. It actually consists of 46 prints (10 of them added after publication). In addition, he is responsible for the 1834 One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji (富嶽百景 Fugaku Hyakkei), a work which "is generally considered the masterpiece among his landscape picture books." His ukiyo-e transformed the art form from a style of portraiture focused on the courtesans and actors popular during the Edo Period in Japan's cities into a much broader style of art that focused on landscapes, plants, and animals.

Both Hokusai's choice of nom d'artiste and frequent depiction of Mt. Fuji stem from his religious beliefs. The name Hokusai means "North Studio (room)," (北齋) an abbreviation of Hokushinsai (北辰齋) or "North Star Studio." Hokusai was a member of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism. For Nichiren followers, the North Star is associated with the deity Myōken (妙見菩薩). Mount Fuji has traditionally been linked with eternal life. This belief can be traced to the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, where a goddess deposits the elixir of life on the peak. As Henry Smith expounds, "Thus from an early time, Mt. Fuji was seen as the source of the secret of immortality, a tradition that was at the heart of Hokusai's own obsession with the mountain."

The largest of Hokusai's works is the 15-volume collection Hokusai Manga (北齋漫画), a book crammed with nearly 4,000 sketches that was published in 1814. These sketches are often incorrectly considered the precedent to modern manga, as Hokusai's Manga is a collection of sketches (of animals, people, objects, etc.), different from the story-based comic-book style of modern manga.

Influences on art and culture

Hokusai inspired the Hugo Award winning short story by science fiction author Roger Zelazny, "24 views of Mt. Fuji, by Hokusai", in which the protagonist tours the area surrounding Mt. Fuji, with each stop being a location painted by Hokusai.



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January Project

“Singer Building” - AE146

QUESTIONS:

1. Look at the painting. Is it real, abstract or a bit of both? (both)
2. What is it a painting of? (city)
3. What do you feel when you look at this picture? (unsettling, confused) WHY? (lots of activity, chaos, lots of movement, busy)
4. Where does most of the activity take place in this picture? Where is your eye drawn? (center)
5. What do you think is going on in this picture? (rush hour - accept any reasonable answers)
6. What colors are used at the top of the painting? Why did the artist use these colors? (blue & purple to represent the calm, quiet serene feeling in the sky)
7. What colors are used at the bottom of this painting? Why did the artist use these colors? (red & yellow to represent the activity and hustle and bustle of the city)

SUMMARY:

The Singer Building or Singer Tower at [Liberty Street](#) and [Broadway](#) in [Manhattan](#), was a 47-story office building completed in 1908 as the headquarters of the [Singer Manufacturing Company](#). The building was commissioned by [Frederick Bourne](#), the head of the [Singer Sewing Machine Company](#). He hired noted architect [Ernest Flagg](#), who was an early exponent of the [Beaux-Arts](#) architectural style. Flagg believed that buildings more than 10 or 15 stories high should be set back from the street, with the tower occupying only a quarter of the lot.^[5] The 12-story base of the building filled an entire block front, while the tower above was relatively narrow.

The artist is an American, John Marin. He lived from 1870 - 1953. He was 83 years old when he died. He studied for a time in Europe. If he could be called anything it would be abstract expressionist. He painted this picture in watercolors in 1921. John Marin put a great deal of emphasis on color. He wrote of the “big quiet forms,” of “all sorts of movement and rhythm beats,” but these were only “seen and expressed” through color. For Marin, “color is life, the life sun shining on our world revealing in color light all things.”

ART:

Materials:

pencil
colored markers or water colors
video – [Click Here to View Video](#)

permanent black marker - 1 per child
manilla constr. paper or water color paper



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The video link on this site is only 9:30 minutes of the whole 12:30 minute clip. You can try to show dvd provided in art supply box but not all school computers will play it.

video – [Click Here to View Video](#)

Procedures:

First allow students to view video clip. This clip will show them how sound/music relate to the rhythm of life. The music and cartoon are representative of the period that John Marin painted the “Singer Building”. The music was written in 1924 and the cartoon is to represent the same time period in New York. John Marin painted the “Singer Building” in 1921. Presenting these together give the students a true feeling of the time period and illustrate what life was like at this difficult time. Additionally, this cartoon was colorized with the same ideas in mind. Notice how the cool blues are used to express a quiet mood and how reds and yellows are used to express excitable moments. Much like the way John Marin used the colors in his painting. The upper stories of Marin's art has cool tones showing peacefulness contrasted with the brighter more vibrant colors at the base where the city bustle occurs.

The clip is a little long (10 minutes), but the children really enjoy watching. If you talk about the artwork for 10 minutes, spend 10 minutes to watch the video, and 5 minutes for instructions, you will still have 30 minutes for the project and 5 minutes for clean-up.

1. Give students a piece of white paper. Tell them they are to create a building or city scene like at the beginning of the video clip. They are to take their pencil and draw their building/city without lifting their pencil or retracing when possible. You may want to replay the beginning of the video clip to show them.
2. After they are finished, have them go over their pencil lines with a black sharpie and then allow them to watercolor their city using color the same way as John Marin in his “Singer Building” painting and Disney in their “Rhapsody in Blue” cartoon.



John Marin



Singer Building

John Marin (1870-1953)
Watercolor, 1921 Size of original: 26 1/2 X 21 5/8"
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania
AE146

There will be the big quiet forms. There will be all sorts of movement and rhythm beats, one-two-three, two-two-three, three-one-one, all sorts, all seen and expressed in color weights. For color is life, the life Sun shining on our World revealing in color light all things.

John Marin

INTRODUCTION

The "movement and rhythm beats" about which John Marin spoke when writing of his work—"one-two-three, two-two-three, three-one-one" are so evident in his watercolor painting of the SINGER BUILDING that you can almost hear them. The big quiet forms are the buildings, and the movement and rhythm beats are the beats and rhythms of New York City. Marin was certainly not the first artist, nor the last, to be caught up in the rhythms of the city of New York. Piet Mondrian painted the staccato beat of the combination of music and traffic in *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, Joseph Stella obsessively painted variation after variation of the cables and towers of the Brooklyn Bridge. But it was the big quiet forms of the buildings in paintings such as *Lower Manhattan* and SINGER BUILDING which so captured Marin's imagination.

HISTORY

In 1905, the photographer, Alfred Stieglitz, and another now well-known photographer, Edward Steichen, established a gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York City in order to exhibit photography, but they were soon to add a group of artists as well. They showed not only paintings but sculpture and the newly discovered African primitive art. The artists of Gallery 291 all shared a distinctly modern point of view, stressing "that art was the expression of the unique, personal vision that allowed no compromise." Rosalind Krauss writes of the concept of originality in modern art:

By originality, here, I mean more than just the kind of revolt against tradition that echoes in Ezra Pound's "Make it new!" or sounds in the futurists' promise to destroy the museums that cover Italy as though "with countless cemeteries." More than rejection or dissolution of the past,

avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth. Marinetti, thrown from his automobile one evening in 1909 into a factory ditch filled with water, emerges as if from amniotic fluid to be born—without ancestors—a futurist. This parable of absolute self-creation that begins the first Futurist Manifesto functions as a model for what is meant by originality among the early twentieth-century avant-garde.

Among those who exhibited at Gallery 291 were Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, Max Weber and John Marin. In addition to a shared philosophy, each of these American leaders of modernism had absorbed the lessons of the European artists. Hartley, Dove and Marin had all worked and studied in Europe, and Stieglitz and Steichen had their fingers on the pulse of the Parisian avant-garde. The *Impressionists* had rejected the precise and orderly world of the Renaissance and the perspective devised to order that world in art. In their worship of the machine and of movement and speed, and inspired by photographers such as Muybridge and Marey who had invented a way in which to photograph a figure in multiple positions on a single plate, the *Futurists* had been able to show this simultaneity in their paintings and sculptures. In the work of Cézanne, Braque had seen the key to a way of painting which, without the frantic and charged lines of movement in space of the *Futurists*, seemed to meet the requirements of a vision made up of many different glimpses—what would become known as *Cubism*. Some of the most obvious effects in the work of Marin are Cezanne's approach to watercolor painting, and the influences of both *Cubism* with its multiple, fragmented views and the dynamics of *Futurism*.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

When we look at John Marin's SINGER BUILDING, the "movement and rhythm beats" are obvious, but without the energy of the vision of the *Futurists*, the fractured and multiple views of the *Cubists* and the color of the *Expressionists*, these things would not have been possible. John Marin put a great deal of emphasis on color. He wrote of the "big quiet forms," of "all sorts of



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movement and rhythm beats," but these were only "seen and expressed" through color. For Marin, "color is life, the life Sun shining on our World revealing in color light all things." But Marin's color is not the pure, startling color of painters such as Gauguin (see *Self-Portrait*) or van Gogh (see *La Mousmé*); and it is not the Mediterranean warmth of Matisse (see *Still Life: Apples on Pink Tablecloth*). His is what he calls a "color light" which refers more to the landscape watercolors of Cezanne, painted out of doors, but, like some of the early works of Matisse and the *Fauves*, his colors have no equivalent in nature. Do the greens, the oranges and the brown colors relate to colors in the city? Why do you think Marin chose to use those particular colors? Do they create a feeling or a mood? Would these colors be produced on the buildings by the "life Sun shining on our World"? The SINGER BUILDING is recognizable, but if we were to stand looking at the building, would we be apt to recognize the other buildings and objects in the painting as we would in scenes such as Turner's *The Dogana and Santa Maria Della Salute, Venice* over one hundred years after it was painted?

Although Marin's view of the SINGER BUILDING is specific, his vision of New York is more of an idea, of an impression or a series of impressions, in paint, not just of the big quiet forms of the buildings, the staccato beats of the city, and the colors of the "life Sun" shining on the world, but of the life of the city itself. As in Marin's painting, the life—the rattle and din, the tumult—of the city is dense down below in the streets where the traffic jams and the automobiles honk and roar, where the subways filled with milling crowds rattle beneath the streets, and the people on foot hurry from one place to another. Here the color is densest, the lines more varied, more frantic as though, like the *Abstract Expressionists* who would follow Marin by some twenty years, you could feel the action of the artist's brush as it follows the agitated rhythms of the city. Above this cacophony rise the skyscrapers, and it is these majestic buildings which not only reach for, but appear to scrape, the sky that characterize the spirit of New York. Standing below in the street and looking

up at these buildings, you see them as giant monoliths rising to the heavens; they rise so high that it is difficult to see the top. As in SINGER BUILDING, the very top of the building seems to dissolve in the atmosphere and to suggest a lofty, soaring presence, untouched and untouchable by the masses of humanity below. The people of the city are its life-blood, and yet there are no figures in the painting; the human presence is only sensed, felt, in the color, the density, the agitation of SINGER BUILDING.

CRITICISM

The poet, Frank O'Hara, also wrote of New York City. Of his poem *Second Avenue*, Marjorie Perloff writes that O'Hara "takes his images from *Second Avenue street scenes, cutting, distorting, and reassembling them so his finished composition retains no more than 'traces' of that which is being represented.*" This could be said also of John Marin's SINGER BUILDING. Read this excerpt from Frank O'Hara's *Second Avenue* and ask students if they can see the similarities. They might even try to write a poem about SINGER BUILDING, using the same methods.

Candidly, the past, the sensations of the past. Now!
in cuneiform, of umbrella satrap square-carts with hotdogs
and onions of red syrup blended, of sand bejewelling the prepuce
in tank suits, of Majestic Camera Stores and Schuster's
of Kenneth in an abandoned storeway on Sunday cutting even more
insinuating lobotomies of a yet-to-be-more-yielding world
of ears, of a soprano rallying at night in a cadenza...

STUDIO ACTIVITIES

Both Frank O'Hara and John Marin were associated with New York City, and O'Hara was closely connected with the art world of New York City. The artist Grace Hartigan said of *Second Avenue*: "It has everything art should have. It has imagery, emotional content, leaps of imagination, displacements of time and place going back and forth, flashings of modern life and inner feelings." But although O'Hara's poetry of 1953 shared many of the same elements with Marin's

1921 painting, the New York City that each work describes is in fact a different city. Have students compare Marin's almost ethereal vision of a city reaching for the heavens to O'Hara's more practical New York of *Majestic Camera Stores* and *Schuster's* and of *umbrella satrap square-carts with hotdogs and onions*. If O'Hara had been an artist who created images with paint instead of words, what would his painting have looked like? Have students paint a 1953 New York by cutting, distorting, and reassembling images; instead of the tall buildings, they might concentrate on *flashings of modern life and inner feelings*—the life of the streets, the signs, the umbrella hot-dog stands, and importantly, people. What would a New York of the nineties look like? Students might use the same method of creating an image of a city or town through a series of impressions as both Marin and O'Hara did, using as a model their own city or town or one with which they are familiar.

Marjorie Wilson, Ed. D.
Penn State University

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February Project

“Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” - AE125

QUESTIONS:

1. Who are these people and what are they doing? (reading, smoking pipe, strolling, sitting, watching something, well-dressed people, maybe upper class/rich people)
2. What time of the year is it? (summer - hazy, umbrellas used to protect them from the sun)
3. How does the picture make you feel? Is there a lot of activity? Is it busy or quiet? (There's no movement - too hot to do anything but just relax).
4. How has this painting been made? (dots)
 - Look closely at the skin of the lady. What colors have been used? (rainbow of colors)
5. Describe the colors in the rest of the painting. (rainbow colors)
6. How many different groups/vignettes of people do you see? (numerous)

SUMMARY:

This picture, “Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte”, was painted by Georges Seurat. George Seurat took the impressionist style of painting - the light and color of the subjects - one step further. He called himself a neo-impressionist which meant he wanted to produce paintings of light and color which also had form. Impressionists were only concerned with the effects of light, air and color. George Seurat separated color into the varied colors each and every color possesses. Example: Purple is made by mixing red and blue, so Seurat would never use purple paint. He would dot red and blue on top of each other to create the look of purple. He was able to separate all the colors out of one individual object and then put them back together again with his use of dots. It's only from a distance that you see the overall colors. When you look closely at his work you continually see all the many colors that create one color. This method of painting is called “pointillism”. George Seurat only lived to be 32. He painted this picture at the age of 28.

ART:

Materials:

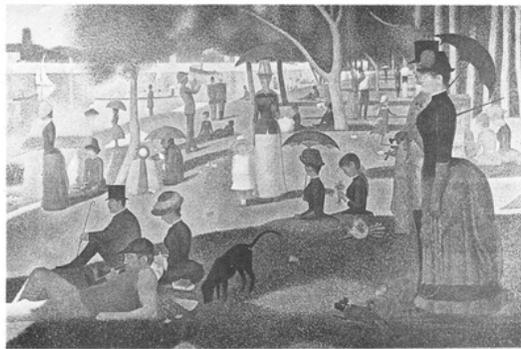
Acrylic Sheets
Q-Tips
Mirror Board
Markers
Hand Sanitizer
Yarn



Procedures:

Pass out small acrylic sheets. Create a simple drawing on the clear film. Apply color to entire surface. The background and foreground should be colored in. Once this is done. Squirt a small amount of hand sanitizer into a cup and dip a q-tip into it. Start dotting the acrylic with the q-tip to create the look of dots/pointillism as in Seurat's artwork. When done, flip over the acrylic sheet and place it on top of the mirror board. Punch a hole in the top of the acrylic sheet and the mirror board. Tie a piece of yarn through them to keep them together and observe the reflected light through the transparent color — it's stunning!

Georges Seurat



Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte

Georges Seurat (1859-1891)
Oil on canvas, 1884-6 Size of original: 81 X 128"
The Art Institute of Chicago
AE125

INTRODUCTION

SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE by Georges Seurat is a painting that has fascinated not only art historians and critics, but poets and playwrights as well. The fascination of the latter, however, seems to be less for Seurat and his meticulous and scientific methods of painting than for the characters that people his large canvas. The question that hangs in the air is "Who are they and what are they doing?" Poet Ira Sadoff allows the characters to speak:

"...The sun is very hot. Why is it no one complains of the heat in France? There are women doing their needlework, men reading, a man in a bowler hat smoking a pipe. The noise of the children is absorbed by the trees. The air is full of idleness, there is the faint aroma of lilies coming from somewhere. We discuss what we want for ourselves, abstractly; it seems only right on a day like this. I have ambitions to be a painter and you want a small family and a cottage in the country. We make everything sound so simple

because we believe everything is still possible...I throw a small scaling rock in the water; I have strong arms and before the rock sinks it seems nearly to have reached the other side. When we get up, we have a sense of our own importance. We could not know, taking a step back, looking at the total picture, that we would occupy such a small corner of the canvas, and that even we are no more than tiny clusters of dots, carefully placed together without touching."

Sadoff must have looked very carefully at the painting, LA GRANDE JATTE, and tried to put himself into the scene. Which couple do you think he was writing about? He gives us a clue when he talks about occupying a small corner of the canvas. It is surely the man and woman in the lower right corner of the painting. The composer, Stephen Sondheim, also wrote a Broadway musical about this painting called, "Sunday in the Park with George," and he also concentrated on the standing figure of the woman with the parasol and the large bustle. The George of the title is the artist

himself, Georges Seurat, and the woman in the painting is his model and the girl he loves, but whom he neglects because of his intense and obsessive drive to finish this very large painting, ten feet by almost seven—a labor of two long years. It is this story that Sondheim has woven about the painting, imagining for his characters not only a present, but a future; but perhaps the most dramatic moment in the play comes when the entire painting appears on the stage, and each of the characters comes to life. It would not be fair to say that either author was concerned with only the story; both Sondheim and Sadoff are fascinated, too, by the methods of Seurat, and the way in which the dots of color *become* the characters in the painting. It would be interesting to have students write a story about LA GRANDE JATTE. Sondheim gave every character in the painting a role—the old woman with the nurse under the tree, the mother and child who walk toward the viewer, the two young girls who face the water, the two soldiers, the man in the sleeveless shirt who seems not to belong to the same social class as those in jackets and top hats, etc.

HISTORY

If the *Impressionists* were concerned with a painting that demonstrated the optical sensations of light and color, and Renoir, in particular, (see *A Girl With a Watering Can*) with the depiction of the essence of pleasure, then Seurat was to go one step further in LA GRANDE JATTE. Every new movement or change in the direction of art both builds upon and is a reaction against the art that preceded it. So it was with Seurat. Both Renoir in his later paintings and Seurat, who called himself a *Neo-Impressionist*, were reacting against the loss of form that characterized *Impressionism*, with its emphasis on the effects of light and air. The *Impressionists* were concerned with impressions—a little square of blue, an oblong of pink, a streak of yellow; Seurat's concerns were of a more serious nature and based on scientific studies of color analysis and visual perception such as *The Law of Simultaneous Colour Contrast* by Eugene Chevreul. In his study Chevreul had shown that color was mixed in the eye, that, for example, pure color would give the optical impression of a halo around it of its complementary.



So that orange would be edged with blue, red with green, and yellow with purple. And since, in this way, each color would change the adjacent color, then color must be an interaction, rather than a simple presentation of single hues, one after another. Seurat built upon the work of the *Impressionists* but reduced their daubs and patches of color to tiny dots or points, a method that became known as *Pointillism*. Seurat was interested in a more scientific approach to the arrangement of elements within his paintings as well, and believed that the form and structure of composition, as well as color, could be analyzed and made constant. The formula upon which he was to base his compositions was called the *golden section* or the *divine proportion*, a formula devised by an architect and engineer named Vitruvius in the first century B.C. and later investigated by such artists as Leonardo da Vinci. So if it is the subject of LA GRANDE JATTE that has so fascinated writers, it was the harmony of color and composition that interested Seurat, and the subject was merely a means toward a more formal end.

CRITICISM

The critic, Robert Hughes, writes of LA GRANDE JATTE:

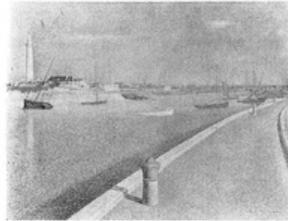
And so, in La Grande Jatte, the vision of pleasure takes on the gravity of history—painting. In constructing this large, elaborate space, Seurat gave every detail the degree of thought one might expect from Raphael or Piero della Francesca. It is linked together by rhymes and chords of shape, some of which are scarcely noticeable at first. The monkey's tail emulates the hook of the dandy's cane. The woman fishing in the left foreground has a tiny twin in the far distance. The decorum of posture and gesture, the distances people preserve between one another on that green abstracted lawn of paradise, are turned into the decorum of classical art itself: manners elevated to aesthetics. Culture and nature play with one another...Seurat was mildly ironical about his middle-class moderns. They glide on the grass like tin toys on wheels, and seem to predict the serious, mechanized absurdity [to come]...what La Grande Jatte was about [is] infinite division, infinite relationships, and the struggle to render them visible—even at the expense of "real life."

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Seurat's methods of painting can be reduced to a formula, but a formula does not ensure success. It may, in fact, become merely a pointless exercise. It is the elements of the formula combined with the knowledge, the instincts, and the sensibilities of the artist that make a successful painting. John Canaday divides Seurat's formula into three parts:

First: Simplify all forms to silhouettes in accord with their basic geometrical equivalents, modifying them as necessary...to increase their effectiveness as pure design...

Second: Assemble these silhouettes into a composition, further modifying the individual forms and adjusting their interrelationship until they are perfectly integrated with one another and the



Georges Seurat. *Port of Gravelines Channel*
Indianapolis Museum of Art

space around them...

Third: Paint this composition in the technique called "divisionism" [the breaking up of color into its component parts] or "pointillism," in accord with theories of color held by the artist.

In LA GRANDE JATTE, how has Seurat followed or departed from the formula described by Canaday and how does this affect our perception of the painting? Robert Hughes says that the figures glide on the grass like tin toys on wheels, and they do look like tin or paper cut-outs; each figure has been reduced to a silhouette—to pure design. There is a quality of unreality to them, but the painting has been so meticulously done that we are not surprised when Sondheim makes them come alive on the stage; in fact we almost wait in anticipation. It is this quality that continues to fascinate the viewers of LA GRANDE JATTE. And, although we may be told that the organization of the figures is based on a mathematical equation, the skill and instincts of

the artist have made us wonder about the relationships of the young couple, singled out by the poet and the playwright both, the monkey and the dog who chases a butterfly, the man and woman who seem to embrace behind a tree. It took Seurat two years to complete this major painting. A lesser artist or a less dedicated painter might have reduced the canvas with its many thousands of dots of color to a kind of pretty surface, but Seurat has made us believe that the painting is more than simply dots on a canvas.

STUDIO ACTIVITIES

LA GRANDE JATTE was the first of Seurat's paintings to use the techniques he developed for the use of color and composition, the largest, and his acclaimed masterpiece. Seurat was quite young to have established such a definitive style; in fact, LA GRANDE JATTE was painted only four years before Seurat's death at the age of thirty-two. It is interesting to speculate about whether Seurat's formulaic work would have become looser and freer had he lived for several more decades. Monet's work, for example, underwent many changes. He began as an *Impressionist* and as his career and time progressed, he became unsure of the direction he was taking, so turned to a more classical style.

It would be a good exercise to have students apply Seurat's formula to a painting of a landscape, or people in a landscape, which seems to suit the confinement of Seurat's formula. Look at another of Seurat's paintings, such as the *Port of Gravelines Channel* of 1890 or *The Bridge at Courbevoie* of 1886. Remember that even some of Seurat's own paintings became merely exercises when reduced to this formula. But all such exercises allow us to better understand the artist's intentions and the work of art.

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Foster Elementary

PTA - Art Masterpiece - 2nd Grade

March Project

“Apples on a Pink Tablecloth”

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the subject of this painting? (fruit, pitcher and tablecloth)
2. What is the name of this type of painting? (a still life)
3. What kinds of lines does the artist use? (curved and straight)
4. How has the artist arranged his composition? (pitcher behind, fruit in front and all on a table with a cloth and there is a wall behind)
5. How has he used the elements of art? (line, color, texture, repetition)
6. Are the lines strong?
7. How would you describe the lines?
8. How did he create the roundness? (with shading, highlights and lines around)
9. When you look at Henri Matisse's piece, what does your eye see first? (the wallpaper)
10. How did the Matisse use color in his paintings? (designs, patterns and bright colors to please the eye)

SUMMARY:

Henri Matisse admired Cezanne and shared his love of nature. Matisse struggled to produce work that was not only pleasing but decorative and expressive. Matisse had the advantage of being able to physically choose and arrange the objects he wished to paint as well as enhance the backgrounds with decorative patterns and borders.

ART:

Materials:

still life arrangement - fruit, bowl, fabric swatch for table covering, and a light source
pencil, colored pencils, grey marker, white drawing paper

Procedures:

Set up a still life with bright a colored tablecloth with the fruit in the bowl add a desk lamp for the spot light. Have the students sketch the still life. Make sure it fills their paper. Point out the highlights and shadows. Even turn out the lights for a few minutes to show the stark contrasts. Then have the students add color with their colored pencils. Again, remind them to incorporate highlights and shadows to create depth. Shadows can be achieved with grey marker and highlights with white colored pencil. See example.



Foster Elementary

PTA - Art Masterpiece - 2nd Grade

Henri Matisse



Still Life: Apples on a Pink Tablecloth

Henri Matisse (1869-1954)
 Oil on canvas, 1924 Size of original: 23 3/4 X 28 3/4
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
 AE148

...radiating light, of energized patches of color, of a feeling of ease and delight, of balance, rhythm and harmony. Everything is in place. As if by ordination, it may not be changed. For what it is cannot be better. What it contains is, in many senses of the word, enlightenment.

Bennet Schiff

INTRODUCTION

Neither art nor nature is a mirror of the "real" world. Gombrich said it well: *Nature reflected in art always reflects the artist's own mind, his predilections, his enjoyments and therefore his moods.* Matisse called this the expression of the feeling he had for life. He said:

Expression...does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed by a violent gesture. The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by figures or objects, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything plays a part. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter's disposal for the expression of his feelings...All that is not useful in the picture is detrimental. A work must

be harmonious in its entirety; for superfluous elements would, in the mind of the beholder, encroach upon the essential elements.

As a painter of still life Matisse had the advantage of being able to physically choose and to arrange the objects he wished to paint, and also to decoratively arrange the objects of choice on the canvas. In writing about Matisse and in looking at his paintings, *decorative* is the key word. We have only to look at STILL LIFE: APPLES ON A PINK TABLECLOTH to see the decorative way in which Matisse arranges the various elements, as Schiff has said, *"As if by ordination, it may not be changed. For what it is cannot be better."*

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

It is important to carefully examine Matisse's STILL LIFE: APPLES ON A PINK TABLECLOTH beside Cézanne's *Fruit and a Jug*. Cézanne's concern was to gain what the Impressionists had lost, to recapture form and solidity without also giving up the purity and brilliance of the Impressionist color. When we look at his still life, the words that come immediately to mind are *form* and *solidity*. When we look at the Matisse the words we use are *decorative* and *expression*. Is this because we know what the artists were trying to accomplish or have they truly accomplished what they set out to do? Cézanne's fruit has been carefully modelled using facets and planes of color alone with which to capture the form. Matisse, who was thirty years younger than Cézanne, and who lived almost fifty years after Cézanne's death, may have used the elder painter's handling of the apples as his model, but it is obvious that this was not his major concern. The chapter in Robert Hughes' book in which he writes about the work of Matisse is aptly entitled "The Landscape of Pleasure." And it is with a sense of pleasure that we look at STILL LIFE: APPLES ON A PINK TABLECLOTH.

Matisse has not used a contrast of bright and dull colors in order to emphasize the form of the fruit; he has treated us to a splendid array of color to please the eye—bright audacious pinks against warm yellow-oranges, acid lime green, and soft blues, the shade of his beloved Mediterranean waters and sky. For the sake of solidity and form, Cézanne has eliminated any kind of atmosphere. We are not aware whether there is air or sunlight or even artificial light in his still life, *Fruit and a Jug*. Matisse's painting, on the other hand, exists in a wholly bright and warmly shining light which—from the bright yellow highlights on the apples, the shadows that they cast, and the lighter pink of the tabletop—seems to radiate from above like an omnipresent sun. In the Cézanne, the flat pattern of the cloth which covers the table serves, by contrast, to point to the roundness of the fruit, while in the Matisse, pattern covers the entire canvas and seems never to let the eye of the viewer rest for a moment—from the tiny snowflake-like patterns on the cloth to the flamboyant leaves that



sweep across the background and the oddly speckled tree trunks that might easily be the necks of a pair of fantastic giraffes. In the Cézanne, in spite of the contradictory angles of vision, we see distinct areas of foreground and background; in STILL LIFE: APPLES ON A PINK TABLECLOTH there is no foreground, middle ground or background. Matisse wanted each part of the painting to act equally on the eye. It is almost as though the viewer might "fall into" the painting. As Hughes says, "It is not real space. It is a fiction; it is art!"

HISTORY

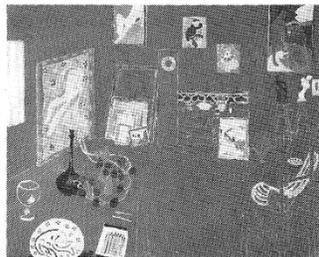
Matisse admired Cézanne and shared his love of nature, but the color in his paintings seems to derive more from the brilliant colors of Gauguin than from any other artist (see Gauguin's *Self-Portrait*). When Matisse first exhibited his paintings with other artists who shared the same love of color, they were dubbed Fauves or wild beasts. In this, they shared with other art movements—such as Impressionism and Cubism—the dubious honor of having received their names through adverse or negative criticism. It is interesting to speculate along with Philosopher/Critic Arthur Danto what "the subsequent history of art" might have been if such labels had not been levelled at these artists: "It is often as though name and substance penetrate each other; that the critical designation of an artistic movement redirects the movement it intends only to label, giving it a consciousness, so that the language of the critic is as dangerous as a paralyzing dart."

Do you think that the Impressionists would have occupied themselves so completely with fleeting impressions or that the Cubists would have resorted to the faceted cubes found in the early paintings without the names, Impressionism and Cubism? But being named, "Wild beast" seems not to have affected Matisse; he continued through a long life and career as an artist to struggle to produce work that was not only decorative, but expressive and pleasing.

STUDIO ACTIVITIES

Matisse said of his paintings: "Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements

at the painter's disposal for the expression of his feelings." This was true regardless of the subject matter of Matisse's paintings. STILL LIFE: APPLES ON A PINK TABLECLOTH is a still-life painting; but Matisse was also well known for both his portraits and paintings of figures in his decorative Moroccan manner or seen in the studio or in the brilliant light and air of his beloved Mediterranean. One of the things that has been noted about Matisse is the way in which he often created the subjects of his paintings. The Impressionist, Monet, created the garden and the waterlily pond that became the subject of all of his later paintings. Matisse's creations were his own paintings, which in turn became the



Henri Matisse. *The Red Studio*
Museum of Modern Art, New York

subject of subsequent paintings. One of his favorite subjects was his wonderfully joyous painting, *La Danse*. It may be seen as background in many of his still-life paintings. It seems to add an intense feeling of movement to the still elements of the painting, just as the strangely moving leaves and tree trunks do in STILL LIFE: APPLES ON A PINK TABLECLOTH. Although Matisse's compositions may appear to be effortless, it was with a great deal of care and anxiety that such effortlessness was accomplished. Have students help to set up a still life such as Matisse would have done—with no "superfluous elements [to] encroach upon the essential elements." Matisse maintained that a still-life painter "must render the emotion they [the objects] awaken in him. The emotion of the ensemble, the interrelation of the

objects, the character of each object—modified by its relation to the others—all interlaced like a cord or a serpent." Students might then make a painting of the still life in which they would: use the same brilliantly warm colors and contrasts of colors; create a tension between the elements of the still life and movement in the background; be certain that the interrelation of objects are "interlaced...like a serpent;" make use of the overall patterning, using several kinds of patterns—from small to large. (Students could bring in books containing several of Matisse's paintings in order to see the great variety of pattern that he employed.) Each element of the painting should have equal importance and act equally on the eye, just as Matisse's paintings do. When the paintings are completed, students might want to create another still life or make a painting of a figure in which their own paintings become an element of the composition as in Matisse's *The Red Studio*.

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