

AUSPICIOUS VISION: EDWARD WALES ROOT AND AMERICAN MODERNISM

Toy Collage

Suggested Level: Grades 1st – 5th

Introduction

William Baziotes was an American artist working in New York City during the middle of the twentieth century. In his studio, he had groups of small toys, and in his painting *Toy* from 1949, he has abstracted the shaped of one of the toys to create a work that emphasizes contrasting colors, shapes, and textures.

This lesson plan uses the work by Baziotes to explore abstraction in the classroom and create mixed-media artwork using the elements of art including color, shape, and texture. Students will learn how to use warm and cool colors, as well as how to abstract simple shapes.



William Baziotes; *Toy*, 1949; Oil on canvas;
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute
Museum of Art, Utica, New York

Supplies

1 sheet of poster paper for each student (approx. 22 x 28 inches)

Scissors

Pencils

Multi-colored tissue paper

Elmer's glue

Water

Cups to mix glue (can be shared by multiple students)

Large paint brushes (wash thoroughly when finished)

Acrylic paint in red, yellow, blue, black and white

Mixing palettes or paper plates

Sponges

Smaller paint brushes

Procedure

Part I

1. Show the students the work *Toy* by William Baziotes.
**Note: If you would like a digital image of this work or other works in the exhibition for use in your classroom, please contact the Mennello Museum of American Art.
2. Using questioning techniques, explore the artwork with the students.
Shape:
 - a. Ask the students what shapes the artist has used, and what form the shapes create.
 - b. Ask the students what type of toy this could represent and what the round light-colored circle could represent. Begin a discussion of abstraction – how when the artist painted the toy, he abstracted it so that the shape was still evident, but he simplified the form and took out details that to him were unnecessary.

- c. Depending on the grade level of the students, brainstorm a list of shapes and/or a list of animal shapes that could be included in their art work.

Color:

- a. Ask the students what colors the artist used and how he might have mixed and applied the color.
- b. Ask the students what feelings they think of when they see this painting and if those feelings would be different if the colors were different (i.e. red and oranges or blues and purples). Ask them what colors they might have picked if they were the artist.
- c. Depending on the grade level of the students, discuss how to mix colors and values and how to pair colors (warm/cool, primary/secondary/complementary colors).

Texture:

- d. Discuss texture and different ways to represent texture in artwork.
- e. Ask the students what they think the painting would feel like using their eyes only
- f. Ask the students when they think they might use different textures in a painting – would they use smooth textures to show a calm or raging river? Would they use rough textures to show a pebble or a boulder? Why or why not?

Part II

1. Cut the poster paper in half. One half will be used as the surface of the work; the other half will be used for the stencil.
2. Mix glue and water in a cup. The glue should be watered down so that it looks milky and is easy to paint with, but is still sticky.
3. Students should take the half of the poster paper that they will use as their background and divide it into three separate sections using a pencil. Encourage the students to make large spaces.
4. Students choose either warm or cool colors for the tissue collage background.
5. Using torn pieces of tissue in their chosen color field, students paint glue onto the poster paper surface, then layer the tissue onto the surface. Students should group like colors in the different sections they have drawn on their paper.
6. When the surface of the poster paper is completely covered in tissue pieces, students should paint a final layer of glue on top. This will act as a seal and keep the tissue smooth.
7. Reinforce the elements of art by exploring the students' color choices and investigating with the students how the layered tissue paper creates visual texture.
8. Allow tissue collage to dry.

Part III

1. Children should pick a toy (for example a bear, rubber duck, stuffed animal or other animal shape) and begin to draw its outline on practice paper.
 - a. Encourage children to draw their animal very large and to make it abstracted like Baziotes' *Toy*. Show them *Toy*, help them explore how Baziotes drew his toy using only simple shapes, and encourage them to stretch their own shapes to abstract their toy.
2. Students draw their final toy shape on the other half of the poster paper.

3. Cut out the shape of the toy, which will now become your stencil. Lay the toy shape on top of the dry tissue paper background.
 - a. Note: The cut-out shape of the toy serves as a positive form, while the poster paper left behind is a negative form of the same shape. For a different effect, you can use the negative as the stencil. This will create a positive shape on the tissue paper background. The interplay between positive and negative shapes can be used as an expansion of the lesson for older elementary students.
4. Time to paint! Have the students mix colors on palettes or paper plates.
 - a. Review warm and cool colors, and discuss how to mix the primary colors to create secondary colors.
 - b. Encourage students to paint with the opposite complementary colors from the colors they used for the background. For example, if a child chose cool colors for the tissue paper background (blue, green, or purple) then that child will use warm colors to paint around the stencil (red, yellow and orange).
5. Using a sponge, dab up and down along the outside of the stencil shape. Suggest that students use more than one value or shade of the color they are painting with. This will require them to practice mixing colors.
6. When finished, remove the stencil to reveal their abstracted toy.
7. The final painting step is to add the toy's eye. Baziotes chose to paint his animals with a large round blue eye and a black center pupil. Have the students choose a color and, using a smaller paint brush, paint their toy's eye.
8. Upon finishing, encourage students to discuss their piece of art and, using their work, give examples of the elements of art to the class.

Florida Sunshine State Standards

This project is easily adaptable to Sunshine State standards for 1st through 5th grade.

Example: 3rd Grade Visual Art – St. 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.3, 3.1-3.4, 4.2 and 4.3

AUSPICIOUS VISION: EDWARD WALES ROOT AND AMERICAN MODERNISM

Abstract Acrylic Painting

Suggested Level: Grades 6th – 8th

Introduction

Arthur Dove was an American artist working during the first half of the twentieth century. Inspired by nature, Dove reduced organic forms to simple, pure essence – in a new method of abstraction. There are three works by Dove in the *Auspicious Vision* exhibition: *Tree Composition* (1937), *Summer Orchard* (1937), and *No Feather Pillow* (1940).

This lesson plan explores the abstract paintings of Arthur Dove and uses the works to inspire abstracted acrylic paintings. Students will learn how to abstract natural forms while experimenting with painting on transparency sheets. This project encourages students to look beyond what is realistic and break down the painting process.



Arthur Dove; *Tree Composition*, 1937; Wax emulsion on canvas; Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute Museum of Art, Utica,

Supplies

White drawing paper (9 x 12 inches)

Pencils

Clear transparency sheets (8 ½ x 11 inches)

Tape

Acrylic paint in red, yellow, blue, black, white and brown

Paint palettes or paper plates

Soft paint brushes

Rinsing cups and water

Paper towels

Procedure

Part I

1. Show the students the work *Tree Composition* by Arthur Dove.
**Note: If you would like a digital image of this work or other works in the exhibition for use in your classroom, please contact the Mennello Museum of American Art.
2. Using questioning techniques, explore the artwork with the students.
 - a. Ask the students to identify elements of art in the painting *Tree Composition* including how Dove used color, line, shape (specifically abstracted organic shapes), and value. Ask the students how Dove's use of the elements has made this work unique.
 - b. Ask the students to identify principles of art in the work, including how Dove used movement, balance, contrast, and center of interest (or emphasis). Ask the students how Dove's use of the principles has contributed to the feeling or expressive quality of the work.
 - c. Discuss the related concepts of realistic, abstract, and nonobjective art. Using a variety of artwork and art styles, ask the students to identify works that can be

categorized as the above concepts. Then ask the students how they would describe Dove's work.

- d. Discuss with the students the reasons why an artist might choose to create art that is realistic, abstract, or nonobjective.
- e. Discuss how Dove's work shows expression through abstracted organic forms. Ask the students what feelings or expression they see in Dove's work. Compare especially *Tree Composition* with *No Feather Pillow* to explore the difference in composition and expressive quality.

Part II

1. Using Dove's work as inspiration, have the students sketch out an abstracted design of a form from nature. The design should have a clear center of interest, significant movement, and balance. It should also be comprised of abstracted organic shapes and include expressive color in a variety of values.
 - a. Note that in the final work, the design will be reversed. The student should plan for this aspect in terms of the composition.
2. Loosely tape a final sketch of the design under a transparency sheet. The drawing will act as a guide for the painting.
3. Discuss with the student how an artist normally completes a composition – blocking in large areas of color and then progressively working up to the details. This lesson plan reverses the process and requires the students to break down the painting process by painting in reverse.
 - a. As an example, this painting technique is used for decorating glass store windows with scenes for the holidays. The scenes are painted from the inside of the store, but are viewed from the exterior.
4. Time to paint! Have the students mix their chosen colors on palettes or paper plates.
5. On the transparency sheet, students will begin by painting the details and outlines of the composition first and then work backwards. The transparency sheet will be flipped over to reveal the final painting.
 - a. On the transparency sheet, begin painting in black and white details and outlines. Trace the paint over any main lines or shapes that require detail. For example, if a circle is included in the composition, then the student should outline the contour of the circle before painting in other lines.
6. Once the black and white detail lines have dried, students will continue to the second level of details. For example, they might paint the colors included inside the main shape. Encourage students to show value changes.
7. The last step is to paint the background. Blend colors for greater interest.
8. When dry, flip the transparency sheet over. The composition will look as if it is under glass, but the paint will actually be on the back of the transparency sheet.
9. Tape the finished transparency to a clean sheet of white paper, which frames the artwork.
10. Upon finishing, encourage students to discuss their piece of art and, using their work, give examples of abstraction, expression, application, and the elements and principles of art to the class.

Florida Sunshine State Standards

This project is easily adaptable to Florida Sunshine State standards for 6th through 8th grade. Example: 7th Grade Visual Art – St. 1.1-1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1-3.3, 3.5, 4.2, and 4.3

AUSPICIOUS VISION: EDWARD WALES ROOT AND AMERICAN MODERNISM

Abstracted Cityscape

Suggested Level: Grades 9th – 12th

Introduction

Preston Dickinson was an American artist working in New York City during the first part of the twentieth century. The urban landscape served as his inspiration. He took the concepts of cubism that he had encountered in Europe and applied them to American industrial and urban scenes. Dickinson fractured and compressed the picture plane, reduced pictorial elements to forms from basic geometry, and used vibrant colors to create his stylized, ordered cityscapes.

This lesson plans explores an urban landscape by Preston Dickinson and uses the work to inspire original abstracted cityscapes. Much like Dickinson, who in *Fort George Hill* depicted a fractured yet vivid landscape of New York City, students will design their own abstracted cityscape of Tulsa and will better understand cubism and abstraction.



Preston Dickinson; *Fort George Hill*, 1915; Oil on linen
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute Museum of
Art, Utica, New York

Supplies

Large piece of heavy white paper or poster board (approx. 11 x 14 inches)

Pencils

Oil pastels

Paint brushes

Turpenoid or paint thinner

Paper towels

Procedure

Part I

1. Show the students the work *Fort George Hill* by Preston Dickinson.
**Note: If you would like a digital image of this work or other works in the exhibition for use in your classroom, please contact the Mennello Museum of American Art.
2. Using questioning techniques, explore the artwork with the students.
 - a. Ask the students to discuss what they see in *Fort George Hill* and how Dickinson has constructed his landscape.
 - b. Ask the students to identify elements of art in the painting including how Dickinson used color, line, shape (specifically how he has used stylized geometric shapes), value, and space (specifically how he has compressed the picture plane).
 - c. Ask the students to identify principles of art in the work, including how Dickinson used rhythm, repetition, movement, and balance.
 - d. Ask the students how Dickinson's use of the elements and principles contributes to the expressive quality of the work.

- e. Discuss elements of abstraction and cubism, how the artist has abstracted the landscape, and how this work compares to and is different from works of European cubism.

Part II

1. Begin by having students find photos of Tulsa – either contemporary images of Tulsa or images from the past. Encourage students to use two or three images as inspiration to assemble into a single composition.
 - a. This lesson could be expanded by pairing it with a photography unit. Students would take their own photographs of Tulsa from their perspective. They could then use their photographs as the basis for the abstracted cityscape.
2. Using their inspiration images, the students should draw an abstracted cityscape on white paper using a pencil.
 - a. Revisit the concepts behind abstraction and cubism, and encourage the students to break down the planes of the buildings, roads, cars, and other pictorial elements.
 - b. Ask them to stylize the forms evident in the inspiration images into basic geometric forms and to compress the picture plane.
 - c. Using *Fort George Hill* as an example, remind the students to incorporate rhythm and repetition within their cityscape.
3. Once the drawing is complete, the students add color using oil pastels.
 - a. Encourage students to show value changes in their compositions. Each shape should have a strong value change from light to dark. For example, if a student is adding color to grass, they should show a change in value from yellow to light green to dark green and finally to blue.
4. To achieve a blended look, students may want to use Turpenoid or another type of paint thinner. In a ventilated area, dip a clean paint brush in the Turpenoid and brush it over the oil pastel in smooth strokes for a seamless change in color.
5. Once the paint thinner has dried, the students can go back and layer even more oil pastel on top. The objective is to create opaque colors, so a heavy application works well.
6. Upon finishing their cityscape, encourage the students to discuss their piece of art with the class and give examples of how they abstracted their inspiration images to create their own cityscape.

Florida Sunshine State Standards

High School Visual Art – St. 1.1, 1.2, 2.1-2.3, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.2 and 4.3

Note: This project and the artwork in the *Auspicious Vision* exhibition are easily adaptable to meet High School Florida Sunshine State standards for other disciplines, including Social Studies and Language Arts.