

Lines, Shapes, and Colors / Introduction to Abstraction

Students will:

- Observe and explore ways that artists use a range of lines and shapes in abstraction
- Examine a variety of media used by artists to create abstract artworks
- Use materials to explore different artmaking processes

Pre-Visit

Introduction:

Students sit in a group. Ask students to share their name and make the shape of the first letter of their name with their bodies. Write each student's name on nametag and ask them to wear it during the whole class.

Slideshow:

Show images of the Guggenheim Museum. Look for different shapes in the architecture of the building. Ask students to identify the shapes they see in the architecture.

Activity:

Distribute 1–3 precut shapes to each student. Ask students to look for each different shape in their classroom. Ask students to share the shapes they found in the classroom with classmates.

Activity:

Provide students with colored paper, images of museum, precut shapes in different colors and textures, shape stickers. Demonstrate different processes used to make a collage: cutting, gluing, overlapping, layering. Ask students to create a collage using these techniques and materials.

Gallery walk:

Display student work on table or wall. Ask students to walk around and look at all the work. Ask students to choose one artwork that they like and share something that they really like about it.

Tell students that they will be visiting the museum in person. Ask students if they have any questions about the museum or their visit.

Museum Visit

Works used:

- Guggenheim rotunda and architecture
- [Vasily Kandinsky, *Several Circles*, 1926](#)
- [Jules Olitski, *Lysander-1*, 1970](#)
- [Constantin Brancusi, *King of Kings*, 1938](#)

Introduction:

Share names, pass out nametags. Ask students to assemble a sketchbook for the tour out of accordion folded paper. Review visual schedule for the tour. Ask students to look for shapes in architecture of museum and share them with classmates.

Vasily Kandinsky, *Several Circles*, 1926

Discussion:

- What kinds of shapes do you see? What colors do you see? Where do you see shapes that are big? Small?
- Do you see shapes that are overlapping? Where do you see overlapping shapes? Ask students to demonstrate overlapping using their hands.
- What do the shapes in this painting remind you of?

For nonspeaking or less conversational groups, provide opposite options for participants to choose from: big/small, overlapping/not touching, half/whole circle, etc.

Activity: Circle Shape Collage

Using cut shapes, circle stickers, and colored paper tape, students will create compositions inspired by their observations.

- How will you hold your paper? Vertically? Horizontally?
- What shapes and colors will you use?
- How will you arrange the shapes? Will your shapes touch? Will they overlap? Will they make a new shape?

Reflection:

Compare and contrast observations between student artwork and Kandinsky's *Several Circles*.

- Did you use the same colors as the artist or different colors? Same or different shapes?
- How did you arrange your shapes? Did they touch or overlap?
- What does your composition remind you of?
- What title would you give your artwork?

Jules Olitski, *Lysander-1*, 1970

Discussion:

- How is this artwork similar to the one we just saw? How is it different?
- What colors do you see? Are there areas that colors are overlapping? What happens when colors overlap?
- What does this painting remind you of?

Activity:

In their sketchbook, challenge the students to mix colors using colored pencils or art sticks. Ask students to create and name a new color.

Reflection:

Ask students to share their new color and its name with classmates. Ask students to share why they chose the name for the color.

Constantin Brancusi, *King of Kings*, 1938

Discussion:

- How is this artwork similar to the one we just saw? How is it different?
- What shapes do you see? How are these shapes arranged?
- This artist was often inspired by nature, things you can find outside. Do you see any shapes in this sculpture that remind you of things from nature?
- The title of this artwork is King of Kings. Do you see anything in the artwork that reminds you of a king?

Activity option 1:

Ask students to think about this artwork as a character. What would this character's name be? Using shape stickers, ask students to create a "friend" for this sculpture in their sketchbooks. Give their new character a name. What would these two "friends" do together?

Activity option 2:

Use model magic to build up a 3D form using shapes discussed.

- Did you use any shapes that the artist used? What is the same about your sculptures? What is different?

Reflection:

Ask students to vote on their favorite object they saw in the museum using a show of hands. Ask students to share what they liked about the object they voted for.

Post-Visit

In classroom, revisit images of artworks viewed in the museum. Ask students to share something they remember about the artwork, or something they liked about it.

Activity:

Give students white Model Magic and colored magic markers. Ask students to divide their model magic into three parts, roll these parts into balls and flatten into a pancake shape. Demonstrate this process for students.

Revisit the discussion of color mixing. Ask students to use markers to color each piece of model magic with one or two colors. Once they are done coloring, they can mix it to make a new color. Demonstrate this process for students.

Ask students to make different shapes out of their model magic, and stack or overlap them into a sculpture. Demonstrate this process for students.

Gallery walk:

Display student work. Ask students to walk around and look at all the work. Ask students to choose one artwork that they like and share something that they really like about it.