



An Exploration of Shapes and Abstraction

Lesson Description: Introduce students to two artists: Henri Matisse and Ashley Mary. Discuss their artworks, specifically their use of different shapes to create abstract paintings. Have students take inspiration from these two artists' work to brainstorm unique shapes and patterns to use in their final piece. Once they've done that, have them start cutting out shapes and creating their very own shape collages.

Lesson Objective: Students should learn about the work of Henri Matisse and Ashley Mary. They should be able understand and analyze how the two artists used unique shapes and interesting patterns to make their works visually appealing. They should be able to draw on their knowledge of color theory (from the previous lesson) to create visually appealing color combinations for their piece as well. They should brainstorm multiple unique shapes and patterns and use at least two of their brainstorms in their final piece. Most importantly, their final piece should show creativity and exploration!

Art History/Theory Relation: In this lesson, students should look at the works on Henri Matisse and Ashley Mary as examples. Henri Matisse was a 20th century French painter whose mastery of the expressive language of color and drawing, displayed in a body of work spanning over a half-century won him recognition as a leading figure in modern art. Ashley Mary is a contemporary artist whose playful paintings are reminiscent of the free-form collages of Matisse. Both use shape and color as the primary building blocks of their work.



Example Pieces:



"The Snail," Henri Matisse, 1953



"Icarus," Henri Matisse, 1943-1944



"La Gerbe," Henri Matisse, 1953



"Commonalities," Ashley Mary



"Pattern of Life," Ashley Mary



"Holding Feeling," Ashley Mary



Materials Needed:

NOTE: All for Art lesson plans are always flexible with materials and students can use whatever they have on hand! We always strive to make art available to everyone, no matter how limited the resources available to them are. Thus, the following list is simply an ideation of possible materials for the above project.

Students can either collage or paint for this piece! We recommend collaging since it will allow them to get more hands-on with creating shapes and patterns, but painting is perfectly fine as well.

If collaging:

1. Construction paper in multiple different colors
2. Scissors
3. Glue
4. Pencils/markers/crayons for brainstorming

If painting:

1. Acrylic paints
2. Paintbrushes
3. A surface to paint on (poster board, paper, canvas, etc.)
4. Pencils/markers/crayons for brainstorming

Step-by-Step Procedure:

1. Introduce students briefly to Henri Matisse and Ashley Mary. Show their artwork, noting their uses of different shapes and how they chose visually pleasing color combinations (perhaps remind them of the previous color theory lesson).
2. Introduce the project. Tell students they will either create a collage or a painting of different, unique shapes. Make sure to let them know that this project is meant to ignite their creativity and that they should have fun with it and think outside of the box!
3. Give students paper and some sort of drawing material to brainstorm different shapes and patterns they might want to use in their final piece. If you plan to have your students collage for the final piece, they might also be able to



brainstorm by actually cutting out shapes (provided you have enough construction paper).

4. Once students have come up with 7-10 shapes/patterns, distribute materials and get them started on their final piece! Students should aim to use at least two of their brainstormed ideas in their final piece.
5. While students are working, walk around and provide encouragement and feedback. Encourage students to really think of unique shapes and patterns to the best of their ability (not just circles, triangles, squares, etc.). Have them consider squiggly lines, spirals, amoeba-like shapes, and whatever else comes to mind!

What Students Should Aim to Accomplish with their Final Piece:

Students' final pieces should include a collage/painting of many different and unique shapes/patterns. They should have created their pieces with deliberate color choices to make the piece visually appealing. They should have thought outside of the box to create a creative piece. Most importantly, they should have had a lot of fun!