



GASP Professional Development Project Visual Arts

Model Project: Color, Form, Shape And Design—A Visual, Hands-On Journey In Modernism Art With Georgia O’Keefe

GASP Artist: Marie Pera mpera@pacific.net

Introduction

Georgia O’Keefe’s work spanned art from the post impressionism movement to op art and she radically changed the art world with her paintings and drawings of natural objects such as bones and flowers that used color, large forms and surreal compositions in new ways in her work. She sketched and painted flowers from her garden, the surrounding landscape and the bones she found in the desert of New Mexico. She also enjoyed sketching and painting seashells. Emotion and mood were primary in her art. She distorted size (particularly in her flower paintings) and also chose colors that departed from the actual objects to reflect her mood. The Georgia O’Keefe Art Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico is an excellent resource including post cards that can be purchased to use in carrying out this project (see **Supporting Resources**).

Through this project, students are introduced to an overview of art history of the Modernist movement along with a timeline of Georgia O’Keefe’s life and work which are shared through stories, magazine articles and Internet research. Students then are engaged in creating their own compositions—abstract drawings in landscapes or still lifes using various media and drawing techniques—with Georgia O’Keefe’s paintings and drawings as inspiration. The project can easily be adapted to teaching all grade levels, supporting the California Visual Art Standards and, starting in 2014, the Common Core Standards. Teachers can integrate the project into science, math and social studies/history. Students in K-6th grades can learn about the Modernist movement, compare and contrast Georgia O’Keefe’s work with other famous artists of that period and enjoy creating their own work using the philosophy behind the Modernists movement.

The timeframe for the project should be at least two sessions and could stretch into a whole week for an hour allowed each day, with ongoing coaching while the project is in progress and a formal critique of student work at the end. In regard to materials, K-2nd grade students do best with tempera paint, colored pencils or oil pastels. In 3rd-4th grade, introducing watercolor, oil pastels, vine charcoal or colored pencils is appropriate. Students in older grades can also use mixed media for their hands-on creations. The minimum would be two sessions.

In the classroom still lifes can be set up and the craft of drawing from real life can be shown. Kimon Nicolaïdes’ *Natural Way to Draw* (see **Supporting Resources**) is an excellent way to teach drawing. Teaching gesture and contour drawing of objects first before beginning any paintings is key. For K-2nd grades, use pencils/colored pencils or chalk to sketch then introduce brushes and tempera paint to create over-sized flowers inspired by Georgia O’Keefe. For 3rd-6th grades, use vine charcoal on newsprint to study still life objects and then introduce oil pastels or watercolor to create surreal landscapes of skulls, bones and flowers in the sky or over mountains. Construction paper can be used for the oil pastels but bringing in quality materials such as 80 lb. white art paper for watercolors results in a noticeable difference.

Arts Area and Grade Level Focus

Visual Arts – Drawing and Painting, K-6th grades and 7th-12th grades with appropriate scaling up

Connection To Elements of Art/Principles of Design

Basic elements of design and composition are explored including the line family, shapes and negative and positive space, texture and color. The color wheel is explained and students paint their own watercolor color wheels with the primary and secondary colors. Upper grades also add the complementary colors in the center of the color wheel. Lines (horizontal, perpendicular, straight, diagonal, curved, spiral) are demonstrated with the pencil and the basic forms are reviewed (oval, circle, sphere, square, rectangle, triangle).

Connection To Core Curriculum and Content Standards for the Visual Arts

Integrating art provides not only an expansion to the core curriculum but also engages and promotes critical thinking and research has shown that students' scores improve when art is integrated into the learning. The standards for the new Common Core are coming out in 2014 and in collaboration with this project offer many opportunities for integration. In science, the spectrum and color could be explored through studying Georgia O'Keefe's paintings. In math, geometry could be used to explore how Georgia O'Keefe arranged her compositions. In Language Arts, students could write biographies about Georgia O'Keefe's life. The Visual Arts Standards are very good guidelines for planning your lessons and are a viable part of the California Curriculum Standards (see **Supporting Resources**). Be sure to use them as you integrate lessons into your curriculum as principals and administrators often expect them to be included.

Visual Arts

Kindergarten

- Students are engaged in creative expression and introduced to historical and cultural content.

1st Grade

- Students are engaged in distinguishing among various media and analyzing art elements and designs.

2nd Grade

- Students are engaged in perceiving and describing differences in mood created by warm and cool colors.

3rd Grade

- Students are engaged in perceiving and describing rhythm and movement in art and distinguishing and describing representational, abstract and non-representational works of art.

4th Grade

- Students are engaged in describing how negative and positive shapes are used in a chosen work of art and in using contrast (light and dark) expressively in an original work of art.

5th Grade

- Students are engaged in identifying and describing the principals of design in visual compositions, with an emphasis on unity and harmony.

6th Grade

- Students are engaged in selecting specific media and process to express moods, feelings, themes and/or ideas.

Steps and Tips

As a "hook" I always begin with a KWL to find out what my audience knows about drawing, painting and artists—the K is what they know, the W is what they want to know and the L is what they learned after the critique is finished. The KWL chart (see *KWL Chart Handout* in **Supporting Resources**) can then be the reference for a follow up language arts activity as well as planning for future art activities.

For K-2nd Grades:

Step One: (About 5 minutes for the KWL introduction) Students are introduced to KWL chart (**K** = what students know **W** = what students want to know **L** = what students learned) to see what they already know about painting and drawing, the **L** is investigated at the end of the lesson after the critique.

Step Two: (About 5 minutes to read the story) Students are read *Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists: Georgia O'Keefe* by Mike Venezia about Georgia O'Keefe's life and shown pictures of her work (see **Supporting Resources**). The book features a cartoon style of illustrating and humor to guide the reader through Georgia O'Keefe's life from childhood to adulthood and to the world's famous woman artist.

Step Three: (About 25 minutes to read the set up, distribute materials, demonstrate and sketch)

Before the session starts spend about five minutes setting up the still life with flowers, skulls and/or seashells as well as getting supplies ready on a table to be distributed—pencils and newsprint to practice drawing objects. [Note: Templates of skulls should also be available if you are asking students to work on a surreal drawing with skulls. Older students can sketch their own skulls but younger students do better using the *Skull Template Handout* (see **Supporting Resources**).] Pass out supplies and demonstrate how to sketch the objects in the still life. Allow five minutes to demonstrate how to hold the drawing pencil for the younger students and have them practice Kim Nicolaides' gesture method—scribbling the shape's mass and then outlining (contour line) around their scribble. Use erasure to take out scribbles after shape is done. Allow about fifteen minutes for sketching.

Step Four: (About 30 minutes to pass out materials, demonstrate and draw) Pass out oil pastels and colored construction paper along with a line drawing of the flower for students to copy if they are working on flower. Demonstrate how to transfer image and use oil pastels then allow twenty minutes for students to work on oil pastel drawings.

Step Five: (For the last 10 minutes) Randomly select student work, modeling for class how to critique artwork, using positive statements. Distribute *Art Terms Vocabulary Handout* (see **Supporting Resources**) so students have art words and terms available to use (composition, design, shape, color, texture, lines, mood) and instruct students that the focus is on positive and that “put-downs” are not allowed. Use prompting questions to help students frame their comments—What do you notice about the colors? The composition? The mood?

For 3rd-6th grades:

Step One: (About 5 minutes for the KWL introduction) Students are introduced to KWL chart (**K** = what students know **W** = what students want to know **L** = what students learned) to see what they already know about painting and drawing, the **L** is investigated at the end of the lesson after the critique.

Step Two: (About 10 minutes for introduction) Students are introduced to Internet site of Georgia O'Keefe's work and randomly choose parts of her drawings and paintings to discuss. If possible, photos of Georgia O'Keefe's work are also shown to students from posters, magazines, periodicals and catalogs you have access to in your library. Note how Georgia O'Keefe used shapes in a distorted way later in her life and compare to her early New York landscapes from her apartment widow that looked over the Hudson River.

Step Three: (About 5 minutes to review art periods) Art periods in which Georgia O'Keefe was working are introduced on a timeline and students are engaged in comparing Post-Impressionism with Modernism using samples of work of impressionist artists. For example, ask students to compare how Vincent Van Gogh painted flowers to how Georgia O'Keefe painted them.

Step Four: (About 25 minutes for set up, distribute materials, demonstrate and drawing) Set up still life of objects Georgia O'Keefe used in her paintings (skulls, flowers, sea shells— photos of objects can also be copied for students to work from if you have no access to actual objects) and distribute pencils and newsprint to students to practice drawing objects. Review Kim Nicolaides' *Natural Way To Draw* techniques with newsprint and vine charcoal, demonstrating the gesture method followed by drawing in contour lines. Allow about fifteen minutes for student to draw their objects. [Note: Pre-cut templates of skulls should also be available.]

Step Five: (About 40 minutes). After students practice drawing one or two objects from the still life with vine charcoal then pass out good art paper and media materials (watercolor, oil pastel or colored pencils). Students pick which media (watercolor or oil pastel or colored pencil or mixed media) they want to use. Students then create their own Surreal drawing and painting using the contour method to lay in their composition with a school pencil and then the media of choice (or all three) to create their final art piece.

Step Six: (About 10 minutes) Randomly select student work, modeling for class how to critique artwork, using positive statements. Distribute *Art Terms Vocabulary Handout* (see **Supporting Resources**) so students have art words and terms available to use (composition, design, shape, color, texture, lines, mood) and instruct

students that the focus is on positive and that “put-downs” are not allowed. Use prompting questions to help students frame their comments—What do you notice about the colors? The composition? The mood?

Step Seven: (About 10 minutes) Wrap up with the L on the KWL chart. What did they learn today about the skill of drawing? About choosing a composition? About the final type of art they created? Collect responses verbally and record on chart—if there is time, ask students to complete an anonymous written reflection.

Tools and Materials

The following tools and materials can all be purchased at Blick at www.dickblick.com:

- Blick All-Purpose Newsprint (9 x12 50 sheet pads)
- Blick All-Media Paper (15 x 22 80# weight)
- Tru-Ray Construction Paper (9 x 12 sheets)
- Grumbacker medium strength vine charcoal (12 per package)
- Faber–Castell colored kneaded erasers (3 per package)
- Koh A Nor colored pencils (12 colors per package)
- Prismacolor pencils (12 colors per package) and pencil sharpeners
- Sennelier Oil Pastels (6 color set)

Supporting Resources

- Art Terms Vocabulary Handout
- KWL Chart Handout
- Color Wheel Template, K-3rd Grades Handout
- Color Wheel Template, 4th-6th Grades Handout
- Skull Template Handout
- California Visual and Performing Arts Framework, K-12th Grades at www.cde.ca.gov
- *The Natural Way to Draw*, Kimon Nicolaïdes at Amazon at www.amazon.com
- De Young Museum Exhibit *The Poetry of Things*, Georgia O’Keefe catalog at www.deyoung.famsf.org
- Georgia O’Keeffe Museum postcard reproductions of Georgia O’Keefe paintings at www.okeeffemuseum.org
- American Art Review, February 2012, Georgia O’Keefe, Barbara Buhler Lynes at www.amartrev.com
- *Getting to Know the World’s Greatest Artists: Georgia O’Keefe*, Mike Venezia at Amazon at www.amazon.com
- *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters*, Barack Obama and Loren Long at Barnes & Noble at www.barnesandnoble.com
- Photos of skulls and bones by Marie Pera are available by email at mpera@pacific.net
- Further color wheel resources at www.colormatters.com

Project Objectives & Habits of Mind

There is an old Chinese saying that “talk doesn’t cook rice”—to learn art you need to do so by making art and the following objectives summarize the process, starting with envisioning the drawing or painting and concluding with reflection on the completed drawing or painting. Students who are engaged in this process will come away much more confident about creating art and will enjoy the experience more as well. Moreover, they will be able to use critical thinking skills in much more depth.

Objective One: Students **develop craft** in how to draw with different media-pencil, vine charcoal, paintbrush by guidance, practice and demonstration. They learn how to copy from a real object with Kim Nicolaïdes’ methods of gesturing the mass and then following up with the contour lines.

Objective Two: Students **observe** and **express** by sketching and using color in new ways. Mood is explored in regards to how Georgia O’Keefe used colors in her paintings to reflect happiness and also how she distorted and enlarged everyday objects (both techniques not the norm at that time).

Objective Three: Students **envision** and **reflect** by participating in a critique and seeing their peers work. They also share what they learned in the L part of the KWL chart including what they learned about the Modernist movement, Georgia O’Keefe and her work and why she is still considered one of America’s great woman artists as well as what they learned about themselves through making art, how art is very personal and each person has a different vision.

Making Learning Visible



Project materials and tools.



1st graders using charcoal to create skull sketches and 5th graders creating flower paintings.



Finished skull oil pastel on black construction paper and tempera flower painting on white all-media paper.

Tips for Scaling Project and Further Opportunities

In science classes, an anatomy lesson could integrate drawing and painting inspired by Georgia O'Keefe's art through the study of animal skulls or a life science study of flowers exploring the inside of a flower as if you were a bee gathering nectar. In art this project could be adapted to learn about and explore the Modernist movement and Surrealism introducing artists like Georgia O'Keefe and Salvador Dali and then creating mixed media abstract drawings and paintings.