

# Making the Abstract Abstract

**Description:** The students will be creating first an abstract sculpture from clay, then an abstract painting from that sculpture. The sculpture will be inspired by an abstract expressionistic painting by an established artist.

**Rational:** The students will expand their knowledge and understanding of abstract and non-objective art, as well as the Abstract Expressionism movement and related artists. They will explore a new route to creating abstract art as well as developing the understanding of the values of making art from art.

## Objectives:

- Students will expand their understanding of abstraction and abstract expressionism.
- Students will learn and utilize a new approach to creating original abstract works of art.
- Students will expand their understanding of the value of using art to create new art.
- Students will participate in peer critique and self-assessment, demonstrating a working knowledge of the concepts and terminology of abstract expressionism.

## NYS Standards:

**Standard I:** Students will be using a variety of art materials, processes, and techniques to create an original work of abstract art. The completed piece will incorporate different kinds of subject matters, themes, and metaphors; originating from the model abstract expressionistic painting as well as developing their own metaphors during the process of creating the final painting.

**Standard II:** Students will use available library sources and the internet to create a final abstract painting. The students will use a variety of materials including graphite and/or conte, clay, and paint. Reproductions of the completed sculpture in the form of slides and/or prints will be established for consideration into their final portfolio.

**Standard III:** Students will reflect, interpret and evaluate their own art work through a self-assessment at the completion of the assignment. They will also participate in group critiques with peers work, both mid-process and at the completion of the assignment. Students will evaluate the work both as an independent piece and in relation to the Abstract Expressionism movement.

**Standard IV:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of the Abstract Expressionism movement and its defining elements during classroom critiques and discussion, their self-assessment, and through the quality of their actual assignment.

## Materials:

- Visuals/images (specifically Abstract Expressionism images: William de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Lee Krasner, Grace Hartigan, Clyfford

Still, Morris Louis, Joan Mitchell, etc.. You may want to consider one or two examples of art from art. i.e.: *Bedroom at Arles*, by Vincent Van Gogh and Roy Lichtenstein)

- Sketch books
- Canvas Board
- Graphite
- Conte
- Clay (air drying is preferable)
- Paint (acrylic, watercolor, and/or oil)
- Camera
- Slide Film
- Self-Assessment worksheet

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Abstract Expressionism
- Abstraction
- Action Painting
- “All Over” Composition
- Non-Objective
- Non-Representational

**Procedure:**

**Day 1:**

- Present the motivation of the assignment to the students. Using above mentioned visuals, review abstract expressionism, abstract expressionistic artists, and the defining elements of that movement. Introduce and/or review vocabulary words to the students. (~10 minutes)
- Have students use available resources, such as the library, internet, or available art books to research and choose a painting that they can work from. The chosen painting should be challenging for the project, but realistic when considering the sculptural elements of the assignment. (~15-20 minutes)
- Have students make a quick sketch in their sketchbooks of their chosen painting in order to acquaint themselves with that painting. The sketch should only hint at values and major detail in the painting. (~10-15 minutes)

**Day 2:**

- Review concepts of abstract art and abstract expressionism. What is action painting? What is the difference between non-representational and non-objective art? (5-10 minutes)
- For those students not yet finished with their sketch, have them complete it within the first 10 minutes of class. (5-10 minutes)
- Hand out clumps of clay to students. Each student should only need about 1-1.5 lbs of clay. (5 minutes)
- Students will create a sculpture of their chosen abstract expressionistic painting. They will refer back to images of their chosen painting as well as their sketch. Students should consider composition, positive and negative space. (rest of class)

- Collect sculptures for storage. Finished sculptures should stay to dry, unfinished sculptures should be covered with plastic to keep soft.

### **Day 3:**

- Hand out sculptures to students. Meanwhile, review abstract expression artists. What were Jackson Pollack's paintings famous for? How are Morris Louis' paintings unique?
- Students should complete sculptures if they have not done so yet. (rest of class)
- Students with completed sculptures will now view them from a new perspective but turning the sculpture around, considering an interesting composition in the final painting. Another quick sketch will be made in the sketchbook of how the students are considering creating the final, abstract painting. Students are to use the shapes of the sculpture as well as the shadows that are created in the final painting. (rest of class)
- For those students ready, a final painting can begin on canvas board. Students should lightly sketch out the contour of their sculpture, referring to both the sculpture and the sketch of that sculpture. Students should freely choose colors for the painting, but keep overall selection limited. (rest of class)
- Collect materials and work for storage.

### **Day 4:**

- Hand out sculptures and unfinished paintings. Use student examples to review concept of assignment, encouraging class to participate in classroom critique. How may a sculpture being viewed to creating an interesting composition? What colors may work well with a specific painting? (5 minutes)
- All students should begin the painting by this day's class.
- Give one-on-one critiques to help students adjust their final paintings.
- Students should continue to work on paintings until completion. (rest of class)
- Finished students can complete a self-assessment sheet and hand in the completed assignment.
- Collect materials and projects for storage.

### **Day 5:**

- Hand out unfinished projects. Use completed and almost completed projects for classroom discussion and critique. (5 minutes)
- Students are to complete the paintings.
- Students are to complete the self-assessment page.
- Conduct a classroom critique of finished paintings and how they relate to the sculpture. Use vocabulary words in critique. Which artist does a specific painting remind the class of?
- For students who finish early, presentation of the next assignment can given or other small assignments.
- Slides of the sculpture should be taken at some point for consideration for their final portfolio.

## Rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1
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<b>Choice of Abstract Expressionism painting</b>	Selection presents student with strong challenges, but maintains an ability to complete project effectively and understandably.	Selection presents student with modest challenges, maintains some ability to complete project effectively and understandably.	Selection presents student with easy challenges and barely maintains a level of ability to effectively and understandably complete project.	Selection presents student with either no challenges or unrealistic challenges resulting in an ineffective and unorganized project.
<b>Clay Sculpture</b>	Finished sculpture demonstrates strong understanding of abstraction, has an excellent composition, and relates well to original painting.	Finished sculpture shows modest understanding of abstraction, has good composition and satisfactorily relates to original painting.	Finished sculpture shows little understanding of abstraction lacks good composition and partially relates to original painting.	Finished sculpture shows no understanding of abstraction, unsatisfactory composition and doesn't relate to original painting.
<b>Painting</b>	Painting demonstrates strong sense of abstraction and "all over" composition. Uses excellent choice of colors. Exemplary relationship with sculpture.	Painting demonstrates good sense of abstraction and "all over" composition. Has good color choice. Satisfactory relationship with sculpture.	Painting demonstrates poor sense of abstraction and "all over" composition. Poor color choice and lacking relationship with sculpture.	Painting demonstrates unsatisfactory abstraction and "all over" composition. Bad color choice. No obvious relationship with sculpture.
<b>Self-Assessment and Classroom Critique</b>	Student demonstrates excellent understanding of assignment concepts and vocabulary in self-assessment and critique.	Student demonstrates good understanding of assignment concepts and vocabulary in self-assessment and critique.	Student demonstrates satisfactory knowledge of assignment concepts and vocabulary in self-assessment and critique.	Student demonstrates unsatisfactory knowledge of assignment concepts and very limited vocabulary in self-assessment and critique.
<b>Classroom Behavior</b>	Student shows ability to work seriously and diligently on project. Student is neat and respectful of other students.	Student shows satisfactory ability to work seriously and diligently. Student is neat and usually respectful of other students.	Student shows modest ability to work seriously and diligently. Student can be messy and disrespectful of other students.	Student shows little interest/ability in working seriously and diligently. Student is usually messy and disrespectful to other students.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **Self-Assessment**

**Are you satisfied with your finished sculpture? What qualities make it a strong sculpture? What qualities weaken the success of the sculpture?**

**Are you satisfied with your finished painting? What qualities make it a strong painting? What qualities weaken the success of the painting?**

**Why did you choose your specific abstract expressionistic painting? Why did you choose the specific colors in your final painting?**

**What other students' finished work is successful in the class? Why?**

**Please define on the back of this page or on a separate page the following terms:**

**Abstraction**

**Abstract Expressionism**

**Non-Representation**

**Non-Objective**

**Action Painting**

**“All Over” Composition**