

## **Pushing or Pulling?**

### **An Introduction to Abstraction and Hans Hoffman**

**Description:** The students will be creating an abstract painting from a self-made collage. The final painting will incorporate certain pushing vs. pulling ideas that artist Hans Hoffman used extensively in his Abstract Expressionist paintings.

**Rational:** This project will help introduce abstract art to the students, an area that can be feared and/or intimidating because of its complexity and ambiguity. Students will become more comfortable approaching an abstract work as well as discussing certain elements of abstraction. Abstract art helped catapult America as the leading country in the art world and is still used extensively in contemporary artwork.

**Objective:** Students will learn and utilize one common approach to creating abstract work from something representational. Students will learn vocabulary related to abstraction. Students will become familiar with different types of abstract art and corresponding artists.

#### **NYS Standards for the Visual Arts:**

**Standard I:** Students will use a variety of materials and methods to create a work of art (drawing, collage, painting, use of computer programs) as well as incorporate several elements and principles of art in that completed piece (use of symbols, images, and themes; selective colors, shapes, patterns/textures; consider composition during the process of creation).

**Standard II:** Students will utilize elements of collage, creating a piece of artwork which alone can stand as it's own piece, raising the concept of collage to a more sophisticated concept than just a "cut-and-paste" step toward a final project. Students will then use that collage as a tool to help explore the use and versatility of paints (watercolor, tempera, acrylic, oils, or gouache).

**Standard III:** Students will respond to the process of creating the art during the procedure, discussing what is working well or not well for them. Students will encourage and constructively criticize each others work throughout the project during small classroom critiques. Students will complete a self-assessment, elaborating on all aspects of the project and the final piece. Students will participate in classroom discussion of artists and artworks presented to them before and during the project. Use of related vocabulary should be encouraged.

**Standard IV:** Students will discuss artists and artworks presented during motivation and throughout the project. Elaboration on the social impact and reaction of these works are to be included, especially the thrust of New York City as the new heart of the art world because of these artists and their creations.

#### **Materials:**

Visuals (Slides, pictures, books, PowerPoint, etc. of model historic artworks), including Hans Hoffman, Jackson Pollack, William de Kooning, Mark Rothko, etc.

Variety of Colored Paper  
Magazines  
Scissors  
Envelope  
Computer/Related programs  
Printer  
Glue/Paste  
Support (heavy board)  
Pencil  
Paint (watercolor, tempera, gouache, acrylic, and/or oil)  
Support (canvas and/or canvas board)  
Self-Assessment sheet

**Vocabulary Words:**

Abstract  
Abstract Expressionism  
Background  
Collage  
Composition  
Foreground  
Line of Coincidence  
Negative Space  
Nonobjective  
Positive Space

**Procedure:**

Day 1

- Present to the students Abstract Expressionism with use of your visuals. Focus on Hans Hoffman and his push vs. pull technique. While presenting Hoffman and his work, go over and explain vocabulary words. Include some other images of other Abstract Expressionists as a means of comparison (i.e. De Kooning, Pollack, and Rothko). What part of the painting do you consider to be the foreground? Background? Where is the positive space? Negative Space? Can you locate an example of line of coincidence? What might help make the composition of this piece strong?
- Present to the students the collage aspect of the project. Use other student/teacher examples of collages that are incorporating solid color paper with magazine bits. Examples should have a strong composition and exhibit exemplary line of coincidence. Explain the process the students will take to create their own collages. Size is optional, allowing students to decide the size. The collages should not be smaller than 6" x 6", however.
- Hand out necessary materials for students to begin their collage. Each student should have accessible solid colored paper, a variety of magazines, scissors, and glue. Do not give students these materials before hand so as to not distract them from the lecture and classroom discussion.

- Instruct students to cut out pictures from magazines and shapes from solid colored paper and begin arranging them on the support (heavy board). Encourage students to experiment with the fragments of the collage before permanently gluing them to the support. Collages should exhibit good line of coincidence and composition, ultimately creating an interesting sense of abstraction.
- Have students put any pieces of collage not yet glued into envelope for continued work during the next class. All students should participate in clean-up activities, giving collages and envelopes to the teacher to hold.

#### Day 2:

- Have materials already available on students' tables so they can quickly continue work on their collages. While handing out collages and envelopes, ask follow up questions from previous days lecture. Who was Hans Hoffman? What kind of art did he primarily create? What is line of coincidence?
- As students finish up their collage, have a one-on-one critique with them. What is working well in the collage? What needs improvement? Encourage students to rework collages to strengthen its composition, line of coincidence, and sense of abstraction. On occasion, bring the whole classroom's attention to a peer's successful collage, or on a collage that is good but can also benefit to a collaborative critique.
- Give students the option of scanning their collage onto a computer and printing it out, offering them a seamless version of their collage. This may help in the next few steps of the project.
- After the collage is completed, give them a painting support (canvas/canvas board, heavy board). Students will have their choice as to which type of paint they'd prefer to use. Paint choice will dictate which support they will use. Painting support should be at least double the size of the collage.
- Instruct students to draw the contour of the collage onto the painting support with pencil.
- Students will then create from their collage an abstract painting. Painting should strongly resemble the collage, but maintain certain qualities of the paint; texture, obvious brushstrokes, etc.
- Clean up materials, paying close attention to care of brushes and palettes, extending the life of these materials. Paintings should be stored in drying racks until next class. All collages should be completed and paintings at least drawn by now.

#### Day 3:

- All painting materials should be out and available for students at the beginning of class. Hand out paintings and collages to students and simultaneously asking follow up questions about project. What is the difference between foreground and background? Positive space and negative space? What is the difference between representational and nonrepresentational/nonobjective art?
- Students will spend all of the class painting from their collages. Offer assistance in specific struggles with composition or with materials.

- If any students complete assignment early, have them complete the self-assessment critique. Students can also begin a new collage following the guidelines to the lesson.
- Clean-up, again making sure materials are properly cared for. Paintings are stored on the drying rack, collages held by the teacher.

Day 4:

- Materials should be out and ready for student work. Have students immediately start on paintings.
- Students should be completing the paintings by now. All materials are to be cleaned upon completion of the paintings
- When paintings are finished, students are to complete a self-assessment sheet.
- The rest of class should include a classroom discussion/critique on finished paintings. What did the students enjoy? What did they find difficult? What are some strengths and weaknesses with the presented paintings?

## **Rubric**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Craftsmanship</b>	Completed works are clean of glue, neatly cut, and painted in an understandable style. Works are exemplary finished products.	Finished product in free of obvious mistakes, showing mild imperfections and carelessness. Painting is understandable and collage is clean.	Final piece seems rushed and carelessly assembled/painted. Collage glue is messy. Obvious trouble comparing collage with painting.	Final piece is very rushed and messy. No attention was given to detail or relationship between the collage and painting.
<b>Collage Requirements</b>	Exemplary work, demonstrating exciting composition, excellent line of coincidence and unique elements of abstraction.	Good finished product with decent composition and understanding of line of coincidence. Abstract elements are satisfactory.	Average product with unremarkable composition, limited use of line of coincidence and simple insinuations of abstraction.	Unsatisfactory piece with boring composition, little or no use of line of coincidence and extremely limited elements of abstraction.
<b>Painting Requirements</b>	Exemplary work, closely resembling the collage while maintaining elements of the painting medium. Consistency in style throughout piece.	Satisfactory piece with some similarities to the collage. Some understanding and use of a specific style in the painting technique.	Average painting with few similarities to the collage. Inconsistent use of a specific style of painting.	Unsatisfactory painting, barely if at all resembling the collage. Incomprehensive style exhibited.
<b>Classroom Behavior</b>	Contributing extensively to classroom discussions and critiques. Ambitious to help peers. Excellent use of new vocabulary.	Good classroom discussion and critiques. Will help peers when instructed. Some use of new vocabulary. Good care of materials.	Modest contribution to classroom discussions and critiques. Poor understanding of new vocabulary. Modest care of materials.	Little or no classroom discussion/critique activity. No comprehension or use of new vocabulary. Messy with materials and poor cleanup.
<b>Self Assessment</b>	Excellent critique of owns work including both strengths and weaknesses. Excellent knowledge of vocabulary and artist.	Good critique of owns work. Limited assessment of strengths and/or weaknesses. Some knowledge of new vocabulary and artist.	Satisfactory critique of owns work. Little use of new vocabulary. Little knowledge of artist.	Unsatisfactory critique of owns work. Not taken seriously or constructively. No use of knowledge of vocabulary or artist.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Self-Assessment**

**What are some strengths of my collage? Painting?**

**What are some weaknesses of my collage? Painting?**

**What part of the process did I enjoy?**

**What part of the process did I find challenging?**

**On the back of this page, please define the following terms:**

**Abstraction**

**Composition**

**Foreground**

**Background**

**Negative Space**

**Positive Space**

**Line of Coincidence**