



NGV

**MELBOURNE WINTER MASTERPIECES
9 JUNE - 7 OCT 2018**

MOMA

**130 YEARS OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART
FROM THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK**

TEACHER RESOURCE, LEVELS 5-10

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INTRODUCTION

Introduce students to The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York and the exhibition *MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art* by sharing and discussing the following information with your students.

(cover)

Salvador Dalí
Spanish 1904–89
The persistence of memory 1931
oil on canvas
24.1 x 33.0 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Given anonymously, 1934 © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí / VEGAP, Spain. Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018

(following page)

Ei Anatsui
Ghanaian born 1944
Bleeding Takari II 2007
aluminium and copper wire
393.7 x 576.6 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Donald L. Bryant, Jr. and Jerry Speyer, 2008
© Ei Anatsui. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

NGV LEARNING SUPPORTERS

NGV gratefully acknowledges the Packer Family Foundation for their support of NGV Kids exhibitions and education programs.

The NGV warmly thanks Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and the Campbell-Pretty Family for their support of the NGV School Access Program.

DISCOVER MoMA

The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA) is one of the world's leading museums of modern and contemporary art. Its comprehensive collection attracts more than 3,000,000 visitors annually.

MoMA's collection of modern and contemporary art includes an ever-expanding range of visual expression, including painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, photography, architecture, design, film, and media and performance art. The collection comprises almost 200,000 works by more than 10,000 artists.

MoMA was the first museum to recognise photography, cinema, architecture and industrial design as deserving of dedicated museum departments.

MoMA seeks to create a dialogue between the established and the experimental, the past and the present, in an environment that is responsive to the issues of modern and contemporary art, while being accessible to a public that ranges from scholars to young children.

THE EXHIBITION: MoMA AT NGV: 130 YEARS OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

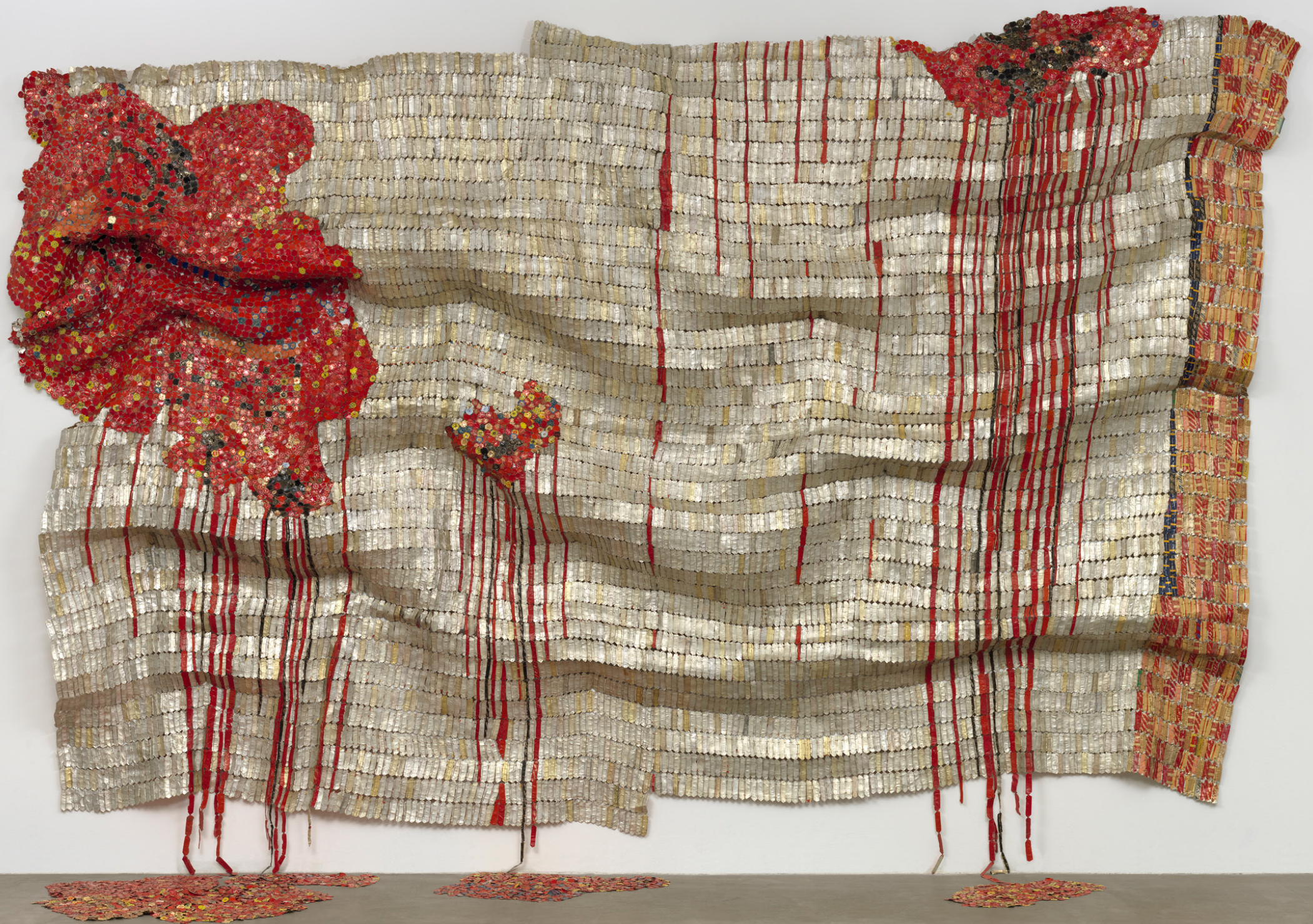
MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art presented by the National Gallery of Victoria, in partnership with The Museum of Modern Art, New York, is the 2018 Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition.

MoMA at NGV provides a unique survey of the Museum's iconic collection. Consisting of over 200 key works, arranged chronologically into eight thematic sections, the exhibition traces the development of art and design from late-nineteenth-century urban and industrial transformation, through to the digital and global present.

Further information

[The History of MoMA, MoMA website](#)

[NGV Media Release](#)



LET'S TALK ABOUT ART AND DESIGN

As a background to the diverse selection of works in the exhibition, discuss the functions of art and design in society.

Use the works on this page, or other works from the exhibition, and the quotations and questions as starting points to build students' understanding of how art and design communicate ideas, emotions, narratives, beliefs, values and culture.

What do each of the quotes

- add to your understanding of the work by this artist/designer in the exhibition?
- add to your ideas about the function/role of art and design?

Create a class collection of quotes from other artists and designers represented in the exhibition, and use these to further extend discussion about works in the exhibition and the role of art and design.

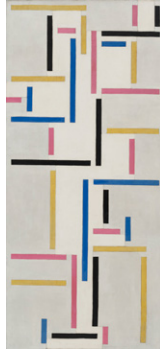
FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit the MoMA website to discover a range of valuable learning resources including:

[An overview and definition of modern art](#)

[Comprehensive information and teaching tips relating to MoMA's collection](#)

WORDS ABOUT ART AND DESIGN



Theo van Doesburg

Dutch 1883–1931

Rhythm of a Russian dance 1918

oil on canvas

135.9 x 61.6 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss

Bequest (by exchange), 1946

Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018

'WE SPEAK OF CONCRETE AND NOT ABSTRACT PAINTING BECAUSE NOTHING IS MORE CONCRETE, MORE REAL THAN A LINE, A COLOUR, A SURFACE.'

THEO VAN DOESBURG



Edward Hopper

American 1882–1967

Gas 1940

oil on canvas

66.7 x 102.2 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1943

© Hopper Estate

'GREAT ART IS THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF AN INNER LIFE IN THE ARTIST, AND THIS INNER LIFE WILL RESULT IN HIS PERSONAL VISION OF THE WORLD.'

EDWARD HOPPER



Zaha Hadid

British, born Iraq 1950–2016

The Peak Project, Hong Kong, China (exterior perspective) 1991

synthetic polymer paint on paper

mounted on canvas

129.5 x 182.9 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

David Rockefeller, Jr. Fund, 1992

© Zaha Hadid Foundation

'I DON'T THINK THAT ARCHITECTURE IS ONLY ABOUT SHELTER, IS ONLY ABOUT A VERY SIMPLE ENCLOSURE. IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXCITE YOU, TO CALM YOU, TO MAKE YOU THINK.'

ZAHA HADID



Frida Kahlo

Mexican 1907–54

Self-portrait with cropped hair 1940

oil on canvas

40.0 x 27.9 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1943

© Frida Kahlo/ARS. Copyright Agency, 2018

‘I PAINT MY OWN REALITY. THE ONLY THING I KNOW IS THAT I PAINT BECAUSE I NEED TO, AND I PAINT WHATEVER PASSES THROUGH MY HEAD WITHOUT ANY OTHER CONSIDERATION.’

FRIDA KAHLO



Glenn Ligon

American born 1960

Untitled (How it feels to be colored me) 1991

oilstick on paper

80.6 x 41.0 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gift of The Bohlen Foundation, 1992

© Glenn Ligon

‘ART POINTS TO THINGS. IT’S A WAY OF GIVING PEOPLE NOT THE STANDARD WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD.’

GLENN LIGON

QUESTIONS ABOUT ART AND DESIGN

- What is art? What are the functions of art?
- Can anything be art? Why or why not?
- What is design? What are the functions of design?
- In what ways are art and design similar and different?
- What is modern art?
- What does contemporary mean? When and why is the term contemporary used to describe art and design?

TIPS FOR LOOKING AT AND ANALYSING ART WITH STUDENTS

Reassure students that a pre-existing knowledge of art is not necessary to enjoy and explore works of art. A sense of curiosity, looking carefully and thinking will help students discover many ideas and meanings.

Explain to students that there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer when interpreting works of art, provided they can justify their opinion with visual evidence present in the works. This stimulates confidence in expressing individual perspectives and viewpoints.

Prior to discussing a work of art, encourage students to look closely at it for two to three minutes in silence. This process allows time for students to gather their first thoughts and ideas.

Pose the following open-ended questions, which are applicable to any work of art and are useful prompts for opening up initial discussion:

- What can you see?
- What does it remind you of?
- What does it make you wonder about?
- What do you think the work of art might be about?
- What do you see that makes you say that?

THEME: ARCADIA AND METROPOLIS

In the late nineteenth century, artists responded to the changed conditions introduced by rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and technological change in many exciting and divergent ways. A 'new art' swept across Europe and North America, transforming painting, sculpture, photography and film together with decorative arts, and industrial and graphic design. The first section of *MoMA at NGV* features masterworks by Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, Seurat and Van Gogh – artists whose work featured among MoMA's earliest acquisitions after it was founded in 1929. It also explores the competing attractions of the countryside and the city – Arcadia and metropolis – for artists including Henri Matisse, André Derain and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

KEY TERMS

[Fauvism](#)

[Expressionism](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Learning](#)

[MoMA Collection](#)



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

German 1880–1938

Street, Dresden 1908 (reworked 1919, dated on painting 1907)

oil on canvas

150.5 x 200.4 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Purchase, 1951

Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018

EXHIBITION LABEL

The crowded city street – here, Dresden's fashionable Königstrasse – was a frequent subject for the German Expressionist group Die Brücke (The Bridge), an art collective Ernst Ludwig Kirchner helped found in 1905. The group sought an authenticity of expression that its members felt had been lost with the innovations of modern life.

Kirchner has violently heightened the colours of this urban scene, depicting its figures with mask-like faces and vacant eyes in an attempt to capture the psychological alienation wrought by modernisation. On the painting's reverse, Kirchner painted a scene of nude women bathing in a natural landscape. Such idyllic scenes were frequent subjects for Die Brücke artists. This one creates a fitting juxtaposition to the jarring city scene it mirrors.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- How does this image of a street scene differ from a real life street scene in a busy city?
- What mood has the artist created in this work? What art elements has the artist used, and how, to create this mood?
- What ideas about modern city life are suggested by this painting? What aspects of the painting suggest this?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- Create your own title for the work which reflects the painting's atmosphere.
- Imagine you were inside the scene depicted – what would you hear and smell?
- What images and colours would you use if you were an artist capturing the atmosphere of Melbourne today? Why would you choose these images and colours to represent Melbourne today?
- In small groups, re-create the scene by miming the body language of the people portrayed in the painting. Now create a performance by adding imagined dialogues or monologues.

'A painter paints the appearance of things, not their objective correctness, in fact he creates new appearances of things.'

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER

How does this comment add to your understanding of *Street, Dresden* 1908?

THEME: THE MACHINERY OF THE MODERN WORLD

In the first decades of the twentieth century, artists found inspiration in the means of industrial production, new areas of scientific discovery, and in the perspective-altering potential of machines such as airplanes and automobiles. Simultaneously, the previously hallowed space of art was altered forever by Marcel Duchamp's 'invention' of the ready-made. This section explores different aspects of this period, with works of art exemplifying the avant-garde visions of Cubism, Futurism, Dada and Orphism, and industrial objects embodying the dynamic motion underlying artistic change.

KEY TERMS

[Dada and Readymade](#)

[Cubism](#)

[Futurism](#)

[Orphism](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Collection \(Léger\)](#)

[MoMA Collection \(Léger, Propellers\)](#)



Fernand Léger

French 1881–1955

Propellers 1918

oil on canvas

80.9 x 65.4 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

© Fernand Léger / ADAGP, Paris. Copyright Agency, 2018

EXHIBITION LABEL

Fernand Léger's paintings of this period combined Cubism's simplified, abstract forms with an interest in industrial machinery. The dynamic rhythm of this composition's planes, cylinders and tubes alludes to mechanical motion.

Embodying both solidity and the promise of speed, the propeller emerged as an emblem of modern technology for Léger and his contemporaries. At a visit to an aviation fair in 1912, Marcel Duchamp (whose *Bicycle wheel* is also on view in this gallery) was said to have been so struck by the beauty of a propeller that he remarked to his fellow artists Léger and Constantin Brancusi, 'Painting has come to an end. Who can do anything better than this propeller? Can you?'

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- How has the artist used shape, line and colour to represent propellers?
- What other elements has the artist used in this painting to celebrate the power and precision of machines?
- How has the artist suggested a sense of movement and speed?
- What aspects of daily life might have inspired Léger?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- If this painting were a piece of music, what style of music would it be?
- What sort of product could this image be used to advertise? Explain why.
- If you stepped inside this painting, what sounds would you hear? In small groups, use these sounds, together with spoken words that describe the painting, to create a sound sculpture evoking the work.
- What machine from today's world would you choose to inspire an abstract work of art in the style of Léger? Why would you choose this machine?

THEME: A NEW UNITY

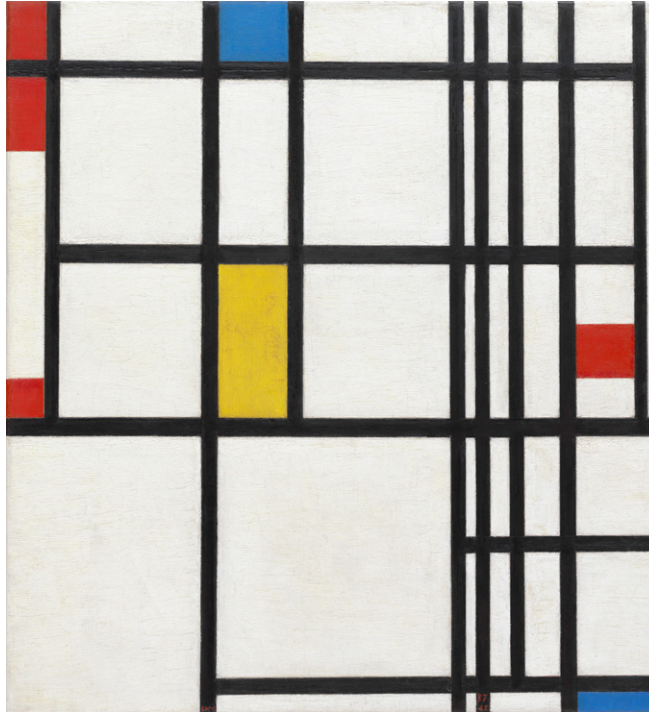
The third section of *MoMA at NGV* explores various tendencies that unified art, architecture and design within a utopian vision for the future: the Russian avant-garde, De Stijl, Bauhaus and Joaquín Torres-García's 'school of the South'. These movements, which arose independently in Russia, the Netherlands, Germany and Uruguay between the 1910s and 1930s, emphasised the transformative power of modern art in daily life. Artists such as Lyubov Popova, Piet Mondrian and László Moholy-Nagy sought to renew art by adopting a radical abstraction. Painting, sculpture, graphic design, furniture, textiles, theatre designs and film posters show the diversity of cross-media practices which continue to inspire artists and designers today.

KEY TERMS

[Abstract](#)
[De Stijl](#)
[Bauhaus](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Collection \(Mondrian\)](#)
[MoMA Collection \(Rietveld\)](#)



Piet Mondrian

Dutch 1872–1944

Composition in red, blue, and yellow 1937–42

oil on canvas

60.3 x 55.4 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, 1967

Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018

EXHIBITION LABEL

This painting is one of a group referred to as Piet Mondrian's 'transatlantic paintings', begun in Paris or London in the mid to late 1930s and finished (or reworked) after his 1940 arrival in New York, having fled Europe ahead of the Second World War.

The artist's doctrine of Neo-Plasticism, pioneered in the 1920s, restricted his means to straight horizontals and verticals, and a palette of primary colours, plus white, black and grey. 'As a pure representation of the human mind', Mondrian theorised, 'art will express itself in an aesthetically purified, that is to say, abstract form'. It was in paintings such as this that Mondrian first allowed coloured rectangles to abut white space, unbounded by black lines.



Gerrit Rietveld

Dutch 1888–1964

Red blue chair designed c. 1918, painted c. 1923

painted wood

86.7 x 66.0 x 83.8 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gift of Philip Johnson, 1953

© Gerrit Thomas Rietveld/Pictoright. Copyright Agency, 2018

EXHIBITION LABEL

Gerrit Rietveld believed the furniture designer should aim for spiritual wellbeing and comfort. Rietveld and his colleagues in the De Stijl art and architecture movement sought to create a utopia based on a harmonic human-made order, which they believed could renew Europe after the devastating turmoil of the First World War.

Hoping that much of his furniture would eventually be mass-produced rather than handcrafted, Rietveld aimed for simplicity in construction. The pieces of wood that comprise the *Red blue chair* are in the standard lumber sizes readily available at the time. The chair's colour scheme – so closely associated with De Stijl, and Piet Mondrian in particular – was applied in c. 1923, six years after the structure was designed.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- What type of colours are used in the painting and the chair? Why might Mondrian and Rietveld have chosen these particular colours?
- Mondrian created harmony by balancing opposites. How many pairs of opposites can you find in *Composition in red, blue, and yellow, 1937–42*? For example, vertical/horizontal.
- What similarities can you see between the painting and the chair?
- What do these similarities suggest about the shared interests of the artists associated with the De Stijl movement?
- Do you think Rietveld's chair design would look out of place in a furniture store today? Discuss.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- Imagine you are a mathematician. What aspects of the painting would you be interested in?
- Create a set of specific instructions for a friend to create a picture in the style of Mondrian. For example; 'use 7 vertical and 5 horizontal black lines', 'use 3 small squares of yellow', and so on. Ask them to experiment with these features until they have created a balanced composition.
- Read the quote by Mondrian below:

'Everything is expressed through relationship. Colour can exist only through other colours, dimension through other dimensions, position through other positions that oppose them. That is why I regard relationship as the principal thing.'

PIET MONDRIAN

Imagine you are in the studio with Mondrian watching him create *Composition in red, blue, and yellow, 1937–42*. Describe the process or steps Mondrian might have followed to create relationships between the different elements in his painting.

THEME: INNER AND OUTER WORLDS

Developments in psychoanalysis and neuropsychology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries influenced many artists who sought to create a visual language to represent the human psyche. Many artists associated with Surrealism, such as Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Frida Kahlo and Max Ernst, were inspired by organic forms in nature. Their work is presented here alongside that of Georgia O'Keeffe and Edward Hopper, whose imagery seems to emerge from a uniquely American unconscious.

KEY TERM

Surrealism

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MoMA Collection



Salvador Dalí

Spanish 1904–89

The persistence of memory 1931

oil on canvas

24.1 x 33.0 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Given anonymously, 1934

© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/VEGAP.

Copyright Agency, 2018

EXHIBITION LABEL

In *The persistence of memory*, hard objects become inexplicably limp within a bleak and infinite landscape, while a metal watch attracts ants like rotting flesh. Salvador Dalí painted his fantastic visions with what he called 'the most imperialist fury of precision', giving the representations of dreams a tangible and credible appearance. It is the classical Surrealist ambition, yet some literal reality is included too: the monstrous fleshy creature draped across the painting's centre is an approximation of Dalí's own face in profile, and the distant golden cliffs evoke the coast of his native Catalonia.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- What one word would you choose to capture the mood of this painting?
- What things are real and what are dreamlike?
- Dalí invented his own 'alphabet' of symbols to express ideas and concepts. Ants for example were a symbol of death or decay. What do you think the 'melting' clocks in the painting symbolise, and what might this suggest about the meaning of the painting?
- Why might artists have wanted to break away from past traditions and create new styles of art, such as Surrealism, following World War One (1914–18)?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- Write a blurb or idea for a fiction book or film inspired by this painting. Make sure you include an enticing title.
- Surreal images are often used in advertising. Why might that be?
- Discuss the quote by Dalí below. What might it mean and how might it apply to the painting?

'Knowing how to look is a way of inventing.'

SALVADOR DALÍ

THEME: ART AS ACTION

This section of the *MoMA at NGV* foregrounds the artist's gesture with works that emphasise the drip and splash of paint, the line and the curve, and the strategy of cut and paste – in painting, collage, textile and sculpture. Paintings by leading exponents of Abstract Expressionism, including Jackson Pollock and Ad Reinhardt, are shown alongside sculptures by Louise Bourgeois and Alexander Calder, exemplifying different sensibilities in mid-century modernism. Work by leading Brazilian modernists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, rarely seen in Australia, are also displayed.

KEY TERM

[Abstract Expressionism](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Collection](#)



FOCUS WORK

Mark Rothko

American, born Russia (now Latvia) 1903–70

No. 3/No. 13 1949

oil on canvas

216.5 x 164.8 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Bequest of Mrs. Mark Rothko through The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., 1981

© Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / ARS, New York.

Copyright Agency, 2018

EXHIBITION LABEL

This work follows a compositional structure that Mark Rothko explored for twenty-three years, beginning in 1947. In these so-called 'multiform' paintings, narrowly separated, rectangular blocks of colour hover in a column against a differently hued ground. With their soft, irregular edges, the forms appear to vibrate, creating an optical flicker and filling the canvas with gentle movement, as areas of colour emerge and recede.

Rothko warned, however, that 'If you ... are moved only by ... colour relationships, then you miss the point'. Interested in the aesthetics of the sublime, he viewed colour as a means to a larger end: 'I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions', he declared, 'tragedy, ecstasy, doom'.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- What are your first thoughts when you look at the painting? What is it about the painting that evokes these thoughts?
- Rothko created this painting by applying multiple layers of thin colour. When you look at the painting surface, what clues can you find about how the paint was applied?
- How and where do the following action words apply to this painting:
hovering, vibrating, floating, flickering, advancing, receding?
- What other action words can you think of to describe the visual effects in the painting?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- What smells, tastes or other sensations does the painting evoke for you? Which of the painting's qualities evoke these sensations?
- Rothko and fellow artist Adolph Gottlieb wrote in 1943 in a letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*:

'To us art is an adventure into an unknown world, which can be explored only by those willing to take the risks.'

Allow this painting to take you on an adventure into an unknown world. Imagine you are inside the painting – is it a landscape, a particular state of mind, an emotion or something else? Discuss what you experience from inside.

THEME: THINGS AS THEY ARE

Culturally, the 1960s and 1970s were decades of epochal change. The art of this period is distinguished by its plurality and diversity of media, with Pop art emerging alongside Minimalism, Conceptualism, performance art and 'happenings'. Politically charged activist art, associated with such causes as Feminism, Civil Rights, the Vietnam War and political struggles in communist Eastern Europe, took many forms. Featured artists include Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, Agnes Martin, Lee Lozano and Sol LeWitt. Works from MoMA's Architecture & Design collection demonstrate the future-focused vision of many designers and architects during this period. Simone Forti's *Huddle*, 1961, one of her 'Dance Constructions', will be performed regularly during the exhibition.

KEY TERMS

[Pop art](#)

[Minimalism](#)

[Conceptual art](#)

[Media and Performance art](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Collection](#)



Claes Oldenburg

American, born Sweden 1929

Giant soft fan 1966–67

vinyl filled with foam rubber, wood,
metal and plastic tubing

305.0 x 149.5 x 157.1 cm (variable) (fan),
739.6 cm (cord and plug)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection,
1967

© Claes Oldenburg

EXHIBITION LABEL

Here Claes Oldenburg has rendered a hard object in a soft material so that it sags and droops, and he has greatly inflated its size. There is humour in this transformation of a hard machine into a collapsible object, and the result has a bodily and sexual connotation.

In its focus on the culture of its time, Pop art seemed jarringly up-to-date in the 1960s, but this fan's design was old-fashioned even then, and evoked a sense of nostalgia. Oldenburg imagined that this sculpture could be a public monument: he pictured it 'on Staten Island, blowing up the bay', and later 'as a replacement for the Statue of Liberty ... [guaranteeing] workers on Lower Manhattan a steady breeze'.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- Choose words to describe this sculpture, such as 'floppy', 'pliable'.
- How has the artist transformed an everyday hard, metallic machine into something that looks soft and organic?
- What connections are there between this work and Pop art? Consider the work's subject matter and materials.
- How might the large scale of this work contribute to its meaning?
- In what ways does this work challenge notions of traditional sculpture?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- What creative associations can you find between the appearance of *Giant soft fan* and:
An animal. For example, a deep sea creature.
A food. For example, licorice.
A sport. For example, boxing.
- Create an alliterative title inspired by the humorous nature of the sculpture, such as *Fake Fan Flops to the Floor*.
- Create a piece of performance art. Look closely at the shapes in the sculpture and imagine the sounds it would make. Work together in small groups to re-create the sculpture with your linked bodies and suitable sounds.

THEME: IMMENSE ENCYCLOPEDIA

By the 1980s and 1990s, modern art was no longer new – it had a long and complex history. Popular culture continued to influence art practice, contributing to a further breakdown of the traditional hierarchies of art. New forms in music, advertising and graphic design, radio and computer technologies signaled the dawn of a new, ‘postmodern’ era. For many artists, the mandate to be original within this context was increasingly challenging. Artists used strategies such as appropriation to reiterate their place in an ever-expanding universe of images and signs; others sought ways of reviving ‘old’ forms of art, such as painting. Social and political challenges, such as the AIDS crisis and continued racial and gender inequality, inspired new responses from artists, while the approaching end of century inspired much retrospection. This section features work by artists including Andreas Gursky, Keith Haring, Cindy Sherman and Kara Walker.

KEY TERM

[Postmodernism](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Collection \(Simmons\)](#)

[MoMA Collection \(Audio Playlist\)](#)



Laurie Simmons

American born 1949

Walking house 1989

silver dye bleach photograph

162.6 x 116.8 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Abramson Collection. Gift of Stephen and Sandra Abramson, 2016

© Laurie Simmons

EXHIBITION LABEL

Laurie Simmons was raised in the 1950s and 1960s, during the ‘golden age’ of television and advertising, and cites media depictions of that time as a motivation for her photographic practice. Her *Walking objects* series of the late 1980s was inspired by a 1952 television advertisement for Old Gold cigarettes which featured women dressed as cigarette boxes dancing across the screen. Each photograph in the series depicts a symbolic object atop a pair of women’s legs, dramatically lit against a dark backdrop.

In *Walking house*, a red-brick, gabled, all-American home has been animated to play the part of ‘woman as homemaker’. By self-consciously engaging with female stereotypes and clichés, Simmons critiques the construction of feminine identity in popular culture.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- What do you notice about the legs and the house in this image? Describe what you see in detail and suggest what meanings these forms convey.
- How has the artist used lighting and scale to create visual impact and meaning in this work?
- Why might the house be covering the woman’s torso and head – what meaning could this suggest?
- What symbols or details can you find in the photograph to suggest that the artist has an interest in identity, consumerism and the traditional roles of women? What other symbols can you find that add to the meaning of the image?
- Consider the qualities of a photograph. How and why might a viewer perceive *Walking house* differently if it were presented as a sculpture instead of a photograph?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- Think of a local or global issue that is important to you. How might you focus attention on this issue through an arresting visual image? Consider using a strange juxtaposition as the artist has done in *Walking house*.
- What would be an eye-catching headline for an article featuring *Walking house*?
- If *Walking house* were a story or a TV series, what might have happened before and after the chapter or episode where we see the photograph?

THE MYSTERY BAG

This activity requires a bag containing diverse objects in a range of sizes, colours, shapes and textures. For example, an unusual rock or shell, string of fake pearls, foam sponge, metallic ball, cowbell, snow globe, mask, plastic lemon squeezer and chess piece.

- Work in pairs or small groups. Each pair or group pulls an object from the bag (without looking).
- Then discuss in detail the particular characteristics of the object (such as texture, colour and shape) and what the object makes you think about.

Think creatively about how these characteristics or associations can be related to aspects of the work, for example:

A string of pearls could be compared to the sleek, shimmering legs in *Walking house*, suggesting gender stereotyping.

- What new things do you notice about the work?
- What new meanings are suggested by this activity?

THEME: FLIGHT PATTERNS

In the last twenty years, MoMA has collected an extraordinary range of contemporary art, with broader representation of artists from previously underrepresented countries in Africa, South America and Asia. This collecting reflects an increasingly globalised art world, in which many artists maintain multiple cultural identities and often explore these identities in their work. Running parallel with increased physical mobility in the twenty-first century has been the seemingly infinite expansion of the digital universe. This endlessly diverse, mutable and fluid world is a subject of contemplation for many contemporary artists, architects and designers including El Anatsui, Mona Hatoum, Camille Henrot and Huang Yong Ping.

KEY TERM

Contemporary art

The following ideas may be helpful prompts for defining this term:

All art was contemporary at the time in which it was made

Contemporary art reflects contemporary life and issues

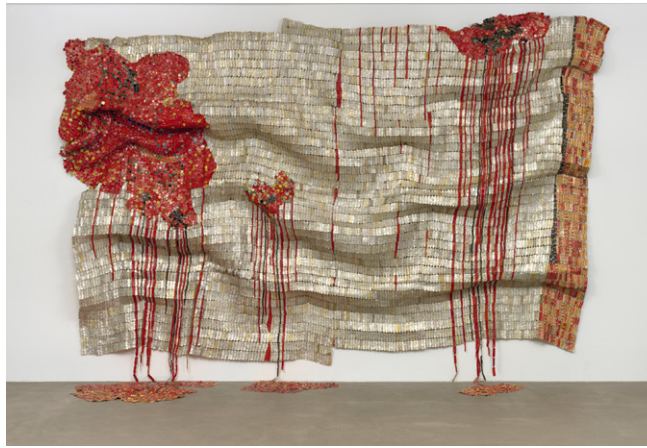
Contemporary art is often challenging and controversial

Contemporary art can help us imagine the future

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MoMA Collection](#)

[MoMA Learning](#)



El Anatsui

Ghanaian born 1944

Bleeding Takari II 2007

aluminium and copper wire

393.7 x 576.6 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gift of Donald L. Bryant, Jr. and Jerry Speyer, 2008

© El Anatsui. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

EXHIBITION LABEL

El Anatsui creates sculptures that allude to contemporary consumer habits and the history of colonialism in his adopted home of Nigeria. This shimmering sheet is composed of liquor-bottle tops and seals discarded by Nigerian distilleries. Anatsui and his assistants have flattened, folded and carefully linked the pieces together with copper wire, creating a simple repetition of forms on a grand scale.

For Anatsui, bottle tops represent 'the material which was there at the beginning of the contact between two continents'. In the complex networks of exchange established between Africa and Europe as early as the fifteenth century, Europeans used alcohol to barter for African goods, and it eventually became a key commodity in the transatlantic slave trade.

EXPLORE AND RESPOND

- What aspects of this work do you find most interesting and why?
- What materials and techniques has the artist used to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary?
- How has he made something rigid into something flexible?
- What do the red elements in the work remind you of? How does this inform your interpretation of the work?
- Find as many active words as possible to describe the processes used to create this work. For example 'flattened', 'crumpled', 'linked'.
- Find as many expressive words as possible to describe the visual effects created by the work. For example 'shimmering', 'glinting'.
- What evidence in the work suggests that the artist is interested in drawing from his African heritage to explore global issues?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- Write down words and phrases that describe what the work makes you think about. Create a group free-verse poem by using a separate line for each person's ideas.
- Develop an idea for creating a work of art or design using recycled products, such as bottle tops, take-away coffee cups or plastic bags. In addition to El Anatsui, the work of artists such as Pascale Marthine Tayou and Tara Donovan may inspire you. How will you manipulate and transform the materials you are working with to create a work with visual impact and meaning?

CLASSROOM CHALLENGE: ARTFUL WRITING

The ability to write fluently and descriptively about art is an important skill, especially for students studying art at a senior level. Describing works of art in detail helps develop writing and interpretive skills. It fosters close looking and vocabulary development, and provides insights into the mood, meanings or messages of works. Art can also be a stimulus for writing creatively in a variety of different genres in the English curriculum.

The following activities provide starting points to develop evocative writing about art.

Similar activities can be carried out with other works with a focus on shape and texture.

DESCRIBING THE ART ELEMENTS



Roy Lichtenstein

American 1923–97

Drowning girl 1963

oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas

171.6 x 169.5 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Philip Johnson Fund (by exchange) and gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, 1971
© Estate of Roy Lichtenstein/Copyright Agency, 2018

LINE

Find interesting words to describe the quality of line in the work.

For example, 'swirling', 'sinuous', 'sweeping'.



André Derain

French 1880–1954

Fishing boats, Collioure 1905

oil on canvas

38.2 x 46.3 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
The Philip L. Goodwin Collection, 1958
© André Derain/ARS/ADAGP/Copyright Agency, 2018

COLOUR

Describe the colours without using their basic names such as red and blue.

For example, 'a soft palette of lilac, mauve and chalky pink is juxtaposed with brilliant hues of tangerine and electric blue'.



Charles Sheeler

American 1883–1965

Ford plant, River Rouge, blast furnace and dust catcher 1927

gelatin silver photograph

24.1 x 19.2 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Thomas Walther Collection. Horace W. Goldsmith Fund through Robert B. Menschel and gift of Lincoln Kirstein, by exchange, 2001

© Charles Sheeler. The Lane Collection. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

FORM

Find ways of describing the different forms.

For example, 'cylindrical, tubular, interlocking, repetitive'.



Frida Kahlo
 Mexican 1907–54
Self-portrait with cropped hair 1940
 oil on canvas
 40.0 x 27.9 cm
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York
 Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1943
 © Frida Kahlo/ARS. Copyright Agency, 2018

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Spend several minutes looking closely at the painting:

What are the **first words** that come to mind when viewing the painting?

For example, 'sombre', 'determination', 'confronting', 'brutal', 'poignant', 'haunting', 'surreal'.

What **opposite ideas** can you find in the painting?

For example, 'delicate/sturdy', 'bright/subdued', 'detailed /simple', 'blurry/solid', 'sinuous/straight', 'minute/monumental'.

Find **similes** to describe the locks of hair scattered on the floor.

For example, 'The strands of her hair are like tendrils of seaweed washed up on a beach'.

Explore **the difference between telling and showing** in writing. *Telling* simply states facts whereas *showing* includes descriptive detail that creates a picture in the reader's mind.

Write a sentence that simply describes the work. For example, 'Frida is sitting on a chair'.

Rewrite this sentence with an emphasis on descriptive detail to show the reader in words what the work looks like. For example, 'Clothed in the voluminous folds of an oversized suit, Kahlo sits solid and defiant on a golden chair'.

A further example relates to Rothko's *No. 3/No. 13*, 1949 discussed earlier in the resource.

A sentence that simply describes the work could be: 'This painting has horizontal bands of colour on a brown background'. With descriptive detail, this sentence can become: 'Soft edged, rectangles of crushed mulberry, velvety black, bone and smoky green hover over a field of terracotta, like soft clouds emerging and then receding into space'.

SYNONYMOUS SENTENCES

Think creatively and build your vocabulary by swapping your descriptive sentences with a partner and finding a synonym for all the major words.

MORE WRITING IDEAS

Choose different works in the exhibition as inspiration for the following writing activities:

SENSORY DESCRIPTION

Describe what you see, hear, smell, taste.

INTERVIEW

Interview a friend about their favourite work in the exhibition and publish your writing in the school magazine or blog.

POETRY

Encapsulate your ideas about a work of art using simple free-verse poetry, the haiku form or a headline poem where headlines are created for one work in each theme and laid out on individual lines.

CRITICAL WRITING

Inspired by reviews of the exhibition, become an art critic and write your own short review of *MoMA at NGV*.

PERSUASIVE WRITING

Create an advertisement for the exhibition using persuasive language and images.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Write an article about the exhibition for a blog or magazine. Think about your intended audience and tailor your writing to inform and interest this audience.

SHORT STORY

Write an imaginative story inspired by a work in the exhibition.

POSTCARD

Imagine you are inside a work of art. Describe your experience in a postcard to a friend.

CLASSROOM CHALLENGE: CURATORS IN ACTION!

WHAT IS A CURATOR?

In art museums, curators are responsible for researching and managing collections and organising exhibitions. Organising an exhibition involves curators selecting and arranging works to provide audiences with an engaging experience and understanding of the work on display. In a large art museum, curators work closely with other expert staff including exhibition designers to create exhibitions.



Robert Indiana

American born 1928–2018

LOVE 1967

screenprint, edition of 250

86.3 x 86.3 cm (image and sheet)

Publisher: Multiples, Inc., New York

Printer: Sirocco Screenprinters, North
Haven, Connecticut

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Riva Castleman Fund, 1990

© Morgan Art Foundation / ARS.

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CREATIVE CURATORS

MOMA AT NGV

After visiting *MoMA at NGV* discuss how the selection and arrangement of works, including the curatorial themes, informed your experience and understanding of the work on display.

- Consider how the works in each theme are related to each other.
- Within each theme can you find connections between groups of works displayed together?
- How do the extended wall labels contribute to your understanding of each theme in the exhibition?
- What did you notice about the wall colour? Why might this have been chosen?

CREATE YOUR OWN EXHIBITION

Think about the works you viewed in *MoMA at NGV* and use the catalogue and/or NGV website to review the exhibition works.

As a class, brainstorm some different themes for a small exhibition featuring six of the works included in *MoMA at NGV*. For example (Love, Death, Beauty, Happiness, Nature, Change, Time).

Work in pairs or small groups to choose one of the themes and a final list of works to be included. Discuss how each work relates to the chosen theme and each other. Think of a title for your exhibition.

Present your exhibition concept to the class.

Extend this activity by:

- Writing an extended label exploring the exhibition theme
- Writing a didactic label for each work
- Proposing design concepts including wall colours and other features of the exhibition space
- Designing some promotional material for the exhibition

CLASSROOM CHALLENGE: THE ARTIST'S STUDIO-EXPLORE ABSTRACTION

This practical artmaking activity is designed to encourage students to explore the process of abstraction using Fernand Léger's *Propellers*, 1908 as inspiration.

Students look at a real life object and draw it in its simplest form, as a series of pure geometric shapes, and use these shapes to create an abstract interpretation of the object.



Fernand Léger

French 1881–1955

Propellers 1918

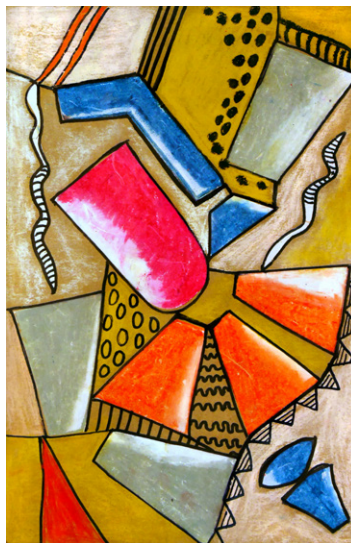
oil on canvas

80.9 x 65.4 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

© Fernand Leger/ADAGP, Paris. Copyright Agency, 2018



The Artist's Studio:
The Art of Abstraction
Sample Artwork
NGV International, 2018

MATERIALS

- A reproduction of the Léger's *Propellers*
- A range of industrial or household objects, or photographs of them. For example; coffee percolator, fan, camera.
- Light brown A4 card
- White A4 paper for drawing on with pencils and pastels
- Pencils
- Oil pastels
- Dry pastels
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Black fineliners – medium

PROCESS

1. View and discuss Léger's *Propellers*, observing how Léger has broken the propellers down into simple parts and added other geometric shapes and colours to create a composition that suggests a sense of energy and movement.
2. Look at one of the industrial or household objects very closely for several minutes to visually identify simple geometric shapes in the structure of the object.
3. Draw at least five shapes found in the structure of the object onto the A4 piece of paper using pencil.
4. Inspired by the colours and shading employed by Léger, colour the shapes using oil pastels.
5. Cut out the shapes and experiment with arranging them in a composition, on the A4 light brown card to suggest the characteristics and essence of the object.
6. When the right composition is achieved, glue the shapes in position.
7. Outline the shapes and add further patterns with black markers or fineliners, to suggest the object and its function.
8. Finally, apply colour to the uncovered areas using dry pastels.