

## GREAT ART IDEAS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

# EXPRESSIVE DISTORTED CITY PAINTING

YEAR 4–6

### OVERVIEW

In this activity students explore how ideas and emotions can be suggested in images of the built environment using distortion, colour and unusual perspectives. They discuss the ways in which environments impact how they feel, and how their own emotions might impact their perception of places. Students experiment with a range of media and processes and apply these approaches to create their own expressive artwork which evokes a mood.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify and discuss how artists manipulate line and colour to communicate their views and emotions.
- Plan and create a painting of a built environment using colour and distortion to express a mood.
- Share their work with their classmates and analyse the expressive choices they made in their work.

### STUDENT EXAMPLES



Painted by Julia  
at an NGV workshop



Painted by Christian  
at an NGV workshop



Painted by Ashlee  
at an NGV workshop

## RELATED ARTWORKS



**Harry Rosengrave**  
*Country village* 1952  
colour linocut  
12.2 × 16.8 cm (image and sheet)  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Gift of Kenneth Hood, 1991  
© Courtesy of the artist's estate



**Jan Senbergs**  
*Altered Parliament House 1* 1976  
synthetic polymer paint and oil screenprint on canvas  
182.5 × 243.5 cm  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Presented by Mrs Adrian Gibson as the winner of the  
1976 Sir William Angliss Memorial Art Prize, 1977  
© Jan Senbergs/Licensed by Copyright Agency,  
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## DISCUSS

*Altered Parliament House 1*, 1976, by Jan Senbergs depicts Old Parliament House in Canberra, where the Australian Government sat until 1988. At the top the building appears clean, white and ordered, but as your eye moves down it becomes fragmented and the colours change to green, brown and black. Senbergs's use of diagonal lines and dark colours create a sense of disorder and a dark mood, suggesting that the government is not as honest and pure as it would like to appear.

Harry Rosengrave's *Country village*, 1952, is a naive and childlike print, which utilises curving lines and bright colours to make the landscape feel alive and joyful. The rough black lines are enhanced by blocks of flat colours including blue, yellow, purple and green.

Share the related works of art with students and use the following prompts with your class to discuss how and why artists create and capture mood in their depiction of landscapes.

- How do different environments affect the way you feel? Can your feelings change the way you perceive an environment?  
*A bright room might make you feel happy and optimistic, while a dark space might make you feel gloomy or reflective.*
- Describe the colours in both works (for example, bright, muted, gloomy). Why did the artists use these colours?
- Describe the types of lines the artists use (for example, sharp, curvy, smooth, rough). Why did the artists choose this kind of line?
- Examine both works, which parts look realistic and which are altered? Discuss how and why the artists have altered or emphasised reality.

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- White A3 cartridge paper
- A4 cartridge paper
- Paint
- Medium and fine brushes
- Grey lead pencils

## CREATE

Share the examples of student work with your class and draw attention to the distorted lines of the buildings, the use of colour and tonal/colour gradients. Students then design and create their own painting of a distorted place through the following steps:

1. Sketch your school, home or a city scene. *Try using different perspectives, such as standing close and looking up, looking through spaces, looking down from up high, and looking up from down low.*
2. Draw your design onto a piece of A3 cartridge paper. *Make the straight lines either curved or rotated on an angle to create a feeling of softness or liveliness.*
3. On a spare piece of paper practice blending paint to create a gradient between two different colours. *Gradients (from dark to light or from one colour to another) can be used to create more drama in your painting.*
4. Use blended gradients to paint the background and/or some of the shapes in your design. *Try using complementary colours in your design, like red and green, blue and orange or yellow and purple.*
5. Outline the buildings and details of the painting in black paint using a fine brush.

## PRESENT & REFLECT

Students share their painting with a partner:

- Do you recognise the location your partner chose to paint? Where is it?
- Which feeling do you think your partner wanted to create? What choices did they make that led you to think this? *Consider use of colour, the perspective they chose and the way the shape has been distorted.*
- How have your paintings been influenced by Rosengrave and Senbergs's works?

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