

Charley Harper: Shape & Line

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY
DESIGNED BY CHARLY COLLINS

Description

During this activity, students will learn about the purpose of line and shape and how they can be combined intentionally to convey meaning in art. Using Charley Harper's work as a base, students will create their own nature-inspired pieces.

Materials

- Videos on lines and shapes
- Scratch paper
- Pencils
- Washable markers (vibrant colors)
- Thick drawing paper
- *Passel of Possums* and *Cardinal and Seed* by Charley Harper (included at the end of the lesson)



Student Example



Student Example

Instructions:

1) Introduce students to the lesson by showing them the attached videos on line and shape in art. After watching the videos, go through the relevant vocabulary attached to this lesson to refresh the students' knowledge on lines and shape. This will help students understand the essential concepts for this lesson and create a base for the upcoming project.

2) Show students *Passel of Possums* and *Cardinal Seed* by Charley Harper and engage in a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) discussion with them. You may want to point out the geometric shapes, lines, and effective use of color in these works.

- VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS are included at the end of this lesson.

3) Distribute supplies to the students and tell them that they will be creating their own geometric, modernist, naturalist pieces inspired by Harper's work.

4) Allow students to choose the central animal for their piece.

- Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of their animal. This will help them pick features to highlight.
- Students can begin to roughly sketch out their animals using pencil on scratch paper.
- After drawing the central figure, have students create the nature-inspired background for their pieces.

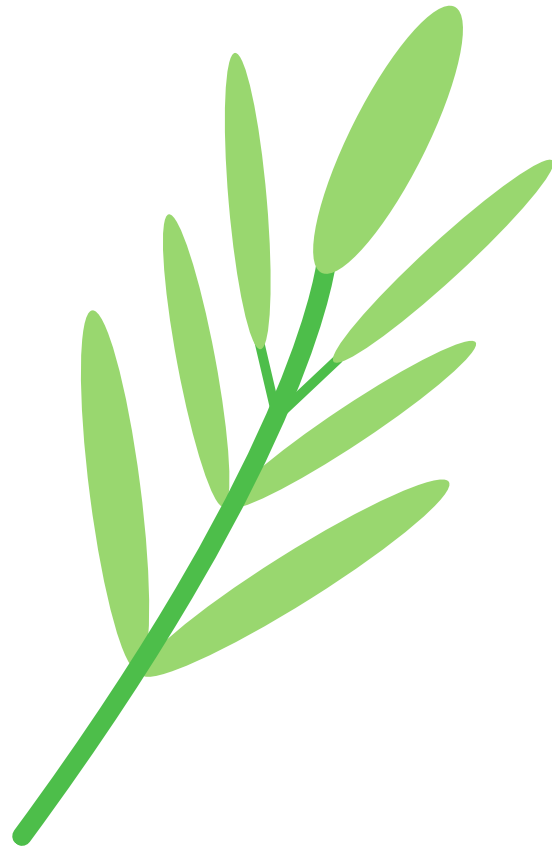
5) After rough sketching, give students their final papers and let them transfer the sketch to this paper.

- Allow students to use washable markers to add rich color to their illustrations.

6) After the students have finished their pieces, allow them to share their art with other students and reflect on their work.

Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Figure
- ✓ Compose
- ✓ Shape
- ✓ Line
- ✓ Repetition
- ✓ Compass
- ✓ Polygon



Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- Performance Standard **(VA:Cr1.1.3)** Elaborate on an imaginative idea.
- Performance Standard **(VA:Cr2.1.3)** Create personally satisfying artwork, using a variety of artistic processes and materials.
- Performance Standard **(VA:Cr2.2.3)** Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and proficient use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.
- Performance Standard **(VA:Cr3.1.3)** Elaborate visual information by adding details in an artwork to enhance emerging meaning.
- Performance Standard **(VA:Re7.1.3)** Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.

Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

What's going on in this picture?

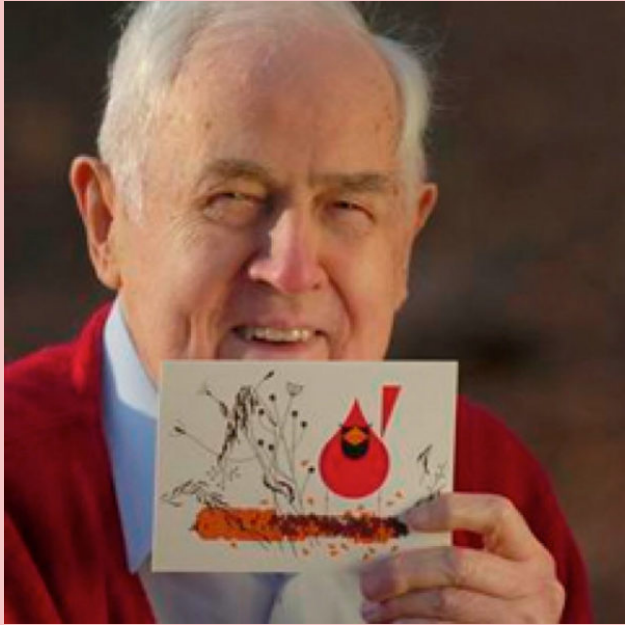
What do you see that makes you say...?

What more can you find?

Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to use in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators

About the Artist: Charley Harper

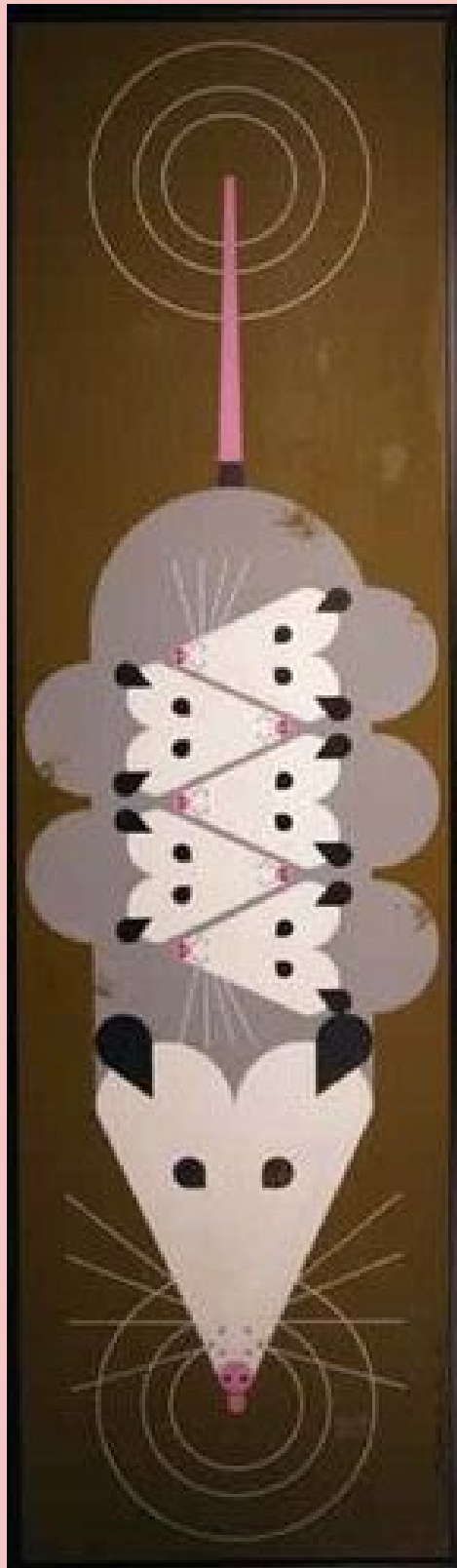


*Harper pictured with one of his prints
Image Source:Charleyharperprints.com*

Charley Harper (1922-2007) was a noted American mid-century illustrator. Born in Frenchton, West Virginia, Harper later moved to Ohio to attend and teach at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Harper described himself as a naturalist, and was inspired by the simple shapes he saw in nature. His use of vibrant colors and simple geometric shapes and lines aligns him with the sleek and spare modernist design trends of the 1950's and 1960's. Harper's work has been featured in many conservation organizations, including the National Parks Service, the Cincinnati Zoo, the Michigan Audubon Society, and Everglades National Park.

**"WHEN I LOOK AT A WILDLIFE OR
NATURE SUBJECT, I DON'T SEE THE
FEATHERS IN THE WINGS, I JUST
COUNT THE WINGS. I SEE EXCITING
SHAPES, COLOR COMBINATIONS,
PATTERNS, TEXTURES, FASCINATING
BEHAVIOR AND ENDLESS
POSSIBILITIES FOR MAKING
INTERESTING PICTURES..."**

-CHARLEY HARPER



Passel of Possums, Charley Harper
Image Source: Harper Originals



Cardinal and Seed (Study for Charley's Cardinal, Charley Harper
Image Credit: Harper Originals