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# ART SMART

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1st Grade / November

THEME:  
Shapes

WORKS:

1. August Herbin, *Friday 1*
2. Wassily Kandinsky, *Several Circles, No. 323*
3. Ida Kohlmeyer, *Circus Series #2*
4. Paul Klee, *Red Balloon*
5. Leon Bellefleur, *Fish in the City*



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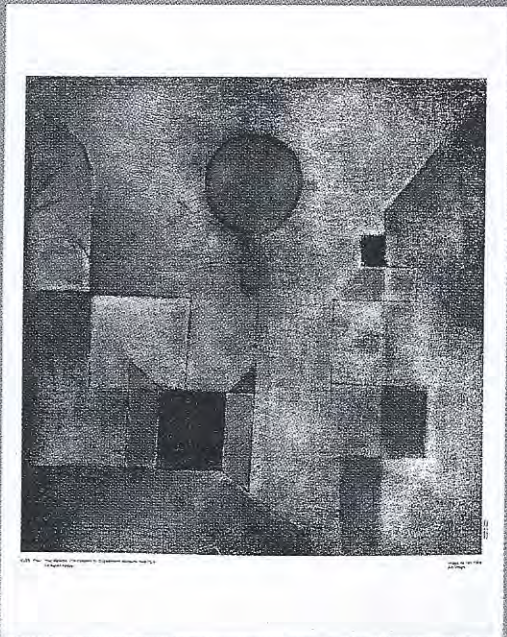
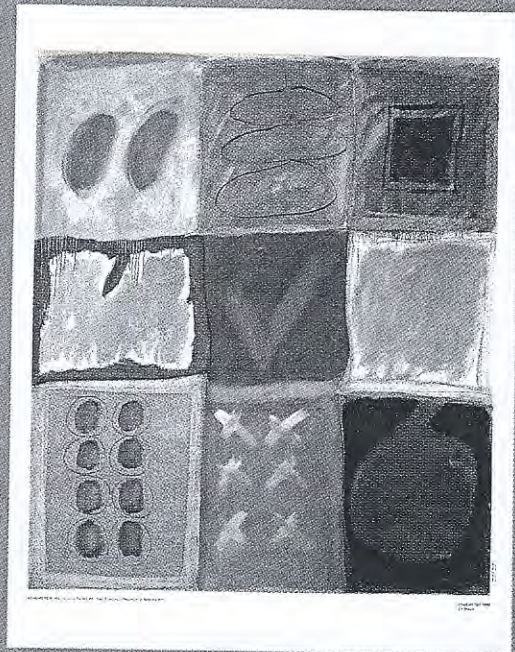
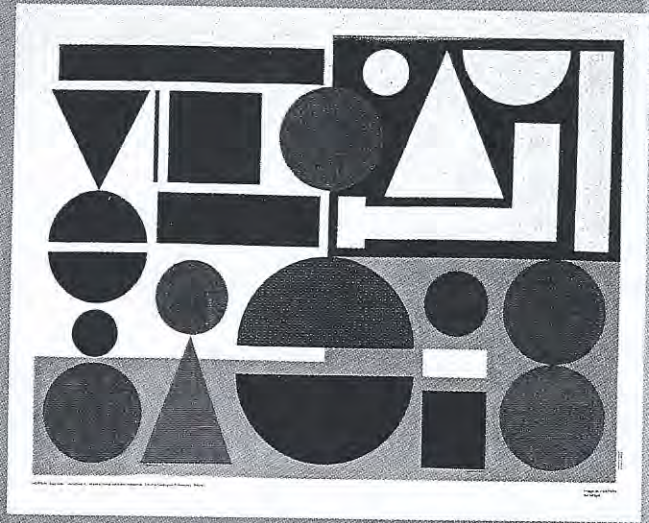
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- 1 Herbin, August, *Vendredi 1 (Friday 1)*
- 2 Kandinsky, Wassily, *Several Circles*
- 3 Kohlmeyer, Ida, *Circus Series #2*
- 4 Klee, Paul, *Red Balloon*
- 5 Bellefleur, Léon, *Le poisson dans la ville (Fish in the city)*





## 1st Grade Art Smart - November "Shapes"

Friday 1- Auguste Herbin (1951)  
Several Circles, No. 323- Wassily Kandinsky (1926)  
Circus Series #2- Ida Kohlmeyer (1978)  
Red Balloon- Paul Klee (1922)  
Fish in the City- Leon Bellefleur (1946)

We've heard the 1st grade has been learning about shapes in Math this year. You are shape experts, so we are looking at art works that are filled with shapes today.

### 1. Show Friday 1, Herbin

- What do you see when you look at this painting? Can you find ... the biggest circle? the tallest triangle? the skinniest rectangle? the longest shape in the painting?
- Can you find the three places in the painting where shapes touch?
- Are any shapes on top of other shapes?
- Are some shapes upside down
- Are some shapes lying on their sides?
- Which colors did the artist use most? (You may want to discuss primary colors)
- Which color is used the most?
- Which color is only used once?
- Auguste Herbin was a French Abstract painter. Do you know what abstract art means? (Abstract art doesn't have a subject, and isn't meant to look like anything.) Many of his paintings contain only geometric forms. He often used pure and unmodulated colors in his paintings.

### 2. Show Several Circles No. 323, Wassily Kandinsky

- What do you see when you look at this painting?
- What do these circles remind you of? (bubbles, balloons, planets, bouncing balls....)
- Are these circles moving or standing still? Floating? Bumping into one another?
- Do you think the artist saw these circles with his eyes, or with his imagination?
- What would be a good title (or name) for this painting?
- Find your favorite color in this painting. Can you find that color somewhere else in this painting? Can you find that color in the room?
- Kandinsky was born in Russia, but also lived in Germany and France. He was also an abstract artist. This painting was the 323<sup>rd</sup> painting in his series of abstract geometric paintings. Do you know what a series is? ( a collection of paintings that have something in common.) Can you imagine painting over 323 paintings?

### 3. Show Circus Series #2, Ida Kohlmeyer

- Did you know that artists give names to their paintings and drawings, just as authors give titles to their books?
- What is going on here? Do you think "Circus..." is a good title? What do you think would be a good title for this work?
- Why do you think the artist chose this title for her painting? Let's search for clues. What would you see, hear, or smell at a circus that we can find in this painting? ( grey shapes might suggest elephants, blue ovals might suggest circus rings, etc.)
- What shapes do you see? What shape did Kohlmeyer use most?

- How many rectangles are there? ( Nine? It's like nine small paintings put together to make one big one.)
- What designs do you see in each section?
- Do you like the colors Kohlmeyer used?
- Ida Kohlmeyer is an American artist who also did series of paintings. This painting is one of many using a grid formation.

4. Show Red Balloon, Paul Klee, but do not mention the title

- What do you see when you look at this painting? What is the red shape? What could the shapes around it be?
- What time of day is it in this painting?
- Where are the people who live in this city?
- What sounds would you hear if you were in this city?
- What would you see if you were inside the balloon looking down?
- Paul Klee was from Switzerland. He often used geometric shapes in his work. He thought children's art was very important. He even borrowed ideas from children's art for his own work.

5. Show Fish in the City, Leon Bellefleur

- What do you see when you look at this painting?
- What shapes do you see?
- Can you find... a star, a person, a big ball, a sidewalk, a house with windows, a chimney, a flag?
- You could invite the children to make up a story about this painting. "Once upon a time, there was a \_\_\_\_\_". Encourage detailed responses e.g. What was the man doing? What did he see? Was he surprised?
- Leon Bellefleur is a Canadian artist who was very influenced by Paul Klee. He also admired children's art, and used some ideas from the art of children in his own work.

**Suggested project:**

- #1 Create a collage inspired by Herbin's Friday<sup>1</sup>. Give each child a 12 x 18 piece of white paper with a black 9 x 12 paper already glued on it. (This creates a paper that's half black and half white.) Give each child a collection of pre-cut construction shapes in white, black, red, blue, and yellow (about 20). Encourage the children to arrange the shapes on their black/white backgrounds. They may want to overlap the shapes. When they are happy with their compositions, have them glue the pieces in place with glue sticks.
- #2 Create transparent collages. See directions in project book

## OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- Explore a painting that is a pure abstraction, composed only of color and shape.
- Explore issues of composition as they use a collection of shapes in a limited color scheme to make their own collages.

## CONCEPTS

- Relation: on top, behind, in front, touching, not touching
- Comparison: biggest, smallest, skinniest, longest

## MATERIALS

Reproduction of Auguste Herbin's *Friday I*

- shape cards (as described in Section 1)
- precut geometric shapes in red, yellow, blue, black and white construction paper
- white paper for gluing, 12"x 18" (30.5 x 45.7 cm) or larger
- glue sticks or paste

## PREPARATION

Use a paper cutter to produce quantities of squares, rectangles and triangles. Use plastic lids to trace circles of various sizes; cut some in halves or quarters. Make approximately 20 shapes per child.



## **AUGUSTE HERBIN, *Vendredi 1 (Friday 1)*, 1951**

1882-1960

August Herbin was born in Quiévrly, France. He moved to Paris in 1903 after studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Lille. There he worked in isolation under the influence of the Impressionists and Post Impressionists. In 1909, he came under the Cubist influence combining cubist structure with expressive landscapes, still life and a few portraits of his wife. His work became gradually more abstract and from 1926, he painted pure abstracts.

Herbin was a founder member of the Abstraction-Création association which favored abstraction. Active from 1931 to 1936, this association managed to bring together, at their annual exhibitions, more than 400 painters and sculptors.

August Herbin's post-war works contain only geometric forms which, according to him, are the origin of all forms in nature and offer clear, flat planes where color can spread out. August Herbin was one of the few French painters who consistently devoted himself to geometric abstraction over a length of time and had considerable influence on young post-World War II artists.

*Vendredi 1 (Friday 1)* is characteristic of Herbin's late period of production: completely flat compositions juxtaposing basic geometric shapes such as the square, the triangle and the circle. The pure and unmodulated colors create intense and resonant contrasts.

## OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- Respond imaginatively to the painting, speculating on the meaning of the work by relating it to things they have seen or imagined.
- Explore mixing colors, overlapping and dispersion of shapes in their own work.

## CONCEPTS

- Close/far, moving/standing still, clustered/scattered

## MATERIALS

Reproduction of Wassily Kandinsky's *Several Circles No. 323*

- tempera paints in pastel colors (mix left-over easel paints with white)
- paintbrushes (optional)
- stamp pads (styrofoam trays, containing felt or thin sponges saturated on both sides with tempera paint)
- black paper, 9" x 12" (23 x 30.5 cm) or 11" x 14" (28 x 35.5 cm)
- circular objects for stamp printing: dowels, jar lids, buttons, new pencil erasers, sponges, etc.

## PREPARATION

Prepare printing pads.

With the children's help, locate circular objects to use for stamp printing.



# WASSILY KANDINSKY, *Several Circles*, No. 323, 1926

1866-1944

The Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky, generally regarded as the originator of Abstract painting, was born in Moscow in 1866. Kandinsky came from an upper-class Russian family and traveled extensively in Europe during his early youth.

In 1896, when Kandinsky was 30 years old, he left Moscow for Munich, which Russians then considered the artistic capital of Europe. Although Kandinsky's work changed radically over the years, his early paintings already show his lifelong preoccupation with expressive form and color. He believed that painters should not try to imitate nature, but rather attempt to capture its vital rhythms and spirit.

Kandinsky's discovery of nonobjective art was largely accidental, occurring one day in 1900 when the 44-year-old painter returned home to his studio after a walk. Glancing at the wall, he noticed a painting he had never seen before that contained a striking vision. Kandinsky was so transfixed by the painting that he did not realize that it was one of his own watercolors, which someone had hung upside-down by mistake. During the next few months, Kandinsky worked furiously to remove all objects from his paintings and set about justifying his new approach in an essay.

In 1912, Kandinsky published *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and *Der Blaue Reiter* (*The Blue Rider*), which explain his theories on abstract art and mysticism. Two years later, the painter returned to his native Russia. After the 1917 revolution, he continued to paint, teach and lecture on art, and was appointed museum administrator by the Bolshevik government. In the face of the Bolsheviks' growing opposition to Abstract art, however, he was forced to flee Russia. In 1922, he returned to Germany, where he was offered a teaching post at the Bauhaus.

During his years in Russia, Kandinsky was influenced by the Russian Constructivists and gradually moved away from gestural abstraction and expressionism towards geometric abstraction. As with his earlier conversion to abstraction, Kandinsky accompanied this new shift with the publication of *Point and Line to Plane*; this book is a veritable encyclopedia of artistic elements.

The Nazis were opposed to Abstract art, calling it decadent, and closed the Bauhaus. Kandinsky was forced to flee to Paris, where he obtained his French citizenship in 1939. In France, Kandinsky's association with Miro, Arp, and the Surrealists resulted in a softening of forms in his work. His shapes became freer and more biomorphic, and his colors, paler.

*Several Circles* is the 323rd painting in his series of geometric abstractions, and was painted when Kandinsky was teaching at the Bauhaus. The painting suggests outer space, with planet-like circles whirling around a dark background, ranging from steel gray to intense black, which seems to hold the planets in their orbits. The luminous halos around the circles add to this impression of outer space. On the uppermost limits of the largest circle is a smaller, tricolored circle, which turns dark blue when it overlaps the jet black circle in the middle of the painting, and then grows progressively paler as it comes into contact with the large circle and the circle's halo. This circle motif is repeated throughout the painting.



## OBJECTIVES

The children will:

- Be encouraged to imaginatively recreate the structure and evolution of this painting.
- Learn that artists give titles to their paintings which help viewers to interpret works of art.

*PLEASE NOTE:*

This introductory lesson is designed to involve children in a series of discussions and related activities.

## CONCEPTS

- Pastel, series, title, quilt

## MATERIALS

Reproduction of Ida Kohlmeyer's *Circus Series #2*

*For demonstration station:*

- paintbrush
- large sheet of white paper, tacked to an easel or wall
- tempera paint (blue, white)
- large sheets of white paper 12" x 18" (30.5 x 45.7 cm) or 18" x 24" (45.7 x 61 cm), ruled into nine rectangles (one per child)

*For students:*

- large or medium-sized paintbrushes (one per child)
- small paintbrushes or cotton swabs
- small amounts of white, black, red, yellow and blue tempera paint, distributed in foam egg cartons (one per child)

## PREPARATION

Rule large sheets of white paper into grids of nine rectangles. Gather egg cartons. Fill wells with small amounts of white, black, red, yellow, and blue tempera paint.



## IDA KOHLMAYER, *Circus Series #2*, 1978

1912 -

Ida Rittenberg Kohlmeyer is a native of New Orleans. It was only at the age of 37 that she began to study painting. Over the years, Kohlmeyer has developed a distinctive style which can be represented by three successive periods or phases.

The first of these phases is known as the “Abstract Expressionist” period. In these works, the artist was strongly influenced by more established artists. Particularly evident is the influence of Hans Hoffman and Mark Rothko.

The second period is referred to by the artist as her “Clusters Series”. These paintings use pictographs placed on colorful grid formations. These pictographs include recognizable symbols as well as invented calligraphic marks. The regularity of the grid enhances the irregularity of the impulsive pictographs. *Circus Series #2* is an example of this period.

The third period is referred to as the “Synthesis” of her knowledge. These paintings represent her most recent works. The pictographs are freed from the grids and arranged in apparently random compositions. These liberated pictographs are painted against filmy, atmospheric backgrounds.

Kohlmeyer is a strong and accomplished artist, endlessly inventive, possessed of a remarkable sense of color.

Kohlmeyer: Kōl - ma' ēr



# 4

## PAUL KLEE, *Red Balloon*

### OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- Respond to a painting which uses shapes to tell a story by imaginatively entering and elaborating upon the scene depicted.
- Explore points of view by investigating one scene from several vantage points and recording their observations.

### CONCEPTS

- Texture, point of view

### MATERIALS

Reproduction of Paul Klee's *Red Balloon*

- tape recorder and audio tape
- camera and film
- portable drawing materials

### PREPARATION

Locate a setting that permits children to compare various perspectives on the same scene: an observation tower, a nearby building several stories tall, a glass elevator, a structure with a balcony or atrium, etc. Gather equipment to record children's observations.



## PAUL KLEE, *Red Balloon*, 1922

1879-1940

Paul Klee was born near Bern, Switzerland. He came from a musical family and developed an early interest in music, becoming particularly proficient at the violin. After hesitating between a career in music and one in painting, Klee finally decided in 1898 to devote his life to art and went to study at the Munich Academy. Early in his career, he considered himself more a graphic artist than a painter. Klee became interested in color, light, and abstract forms only after discovering Robert Delaunay's experiments with color while visiting the artist in France. His trip to Tunisia in 1914 was also decisive in his artistic development. The Mediterranean light and colors radically transformed his art, as can be seen in his diary entry of April 16, 1914: "Color possesses me. It will possess me always, I know it. That is the meaning of this happy hour: color and I are one. I am a painter."

In 1920, Klee was invited by the architect Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus. The school proposed to integrate the teaching of architecture with other visual arts, and was at the time the only art school in the world to firmly reject traditional teaching methods in favor of new ideas. Klee taught a course on the theory of form and directed a painting workshop at the Bauhaus. In 1931, he left the Bauhaus to teach for two years in Dusseldorf.

Paul Klee was one of the first modern artists to recognize the importance of children's art and to accord it an equal place among the other fine arts. Often borrowing directly from children's drawings, and using the simplest means at his disposal, Klee succeeded in communicating profound and universal truths through his painting.

Klee's art has a solid intellectual basis in the theory of the unconscious. Klee's analysis of the human psyche and his attempt to reach back into the history of human consciousness were complicated and difficult enterprises. They required new forms of expression, which Klee found in the art of children.

Imaginary architectural structures and the illusion of perspective are often used by Klee in his work. In *Red Balloon*, Klee arranges diagonal and right-angle lines to suggest a kind of inner courtyard. The large red sphere suggests a moon in the night sky, or a basketball too big for its hoop. This composition is painted on a cotton support woven from a mixture of fine and coarse fibers. The rough textured canvas gives the colors a greater vibrancy and creates an illusion of transparency.

Klee: Klā

## OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- Search for humorous and unexpected juxtapositions as they interpret the story presented in this painting.
- Explore media similar to that used by the artist as they tell stories in their own drawings.

## CONCEPTS

- Line, action

## MATERIALS

Reproduction of Leon Bellefleur's *Fish in the City*

- tape recorder and audio tape
- white and colored chalks
- liquid starch or a solution of sugar and water
- black paper, 12" x 18" (30.5 x 45.7 cm) or larger

## PREPARATION

Pour liquid starch or a solution of sugar and water into small plastic containers.



## LÉON BELLEFLEUR, *Le poisson dans la ville (Fish in the City)*, 1946

1910-

Léon Bellefleur was born in Montreal, Canada, and received a degree from the Jacques Cartier Teachers's College in 1929. Bellefleur spent the next twenty-five years working as a teacher, and took evening courses at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He loved reading, especially poetry, and learned about the Surrealist movement through books. The Surrealists emphasized the unconscious, dreams, and spontaneous expression, qualities which Bellefleur also admired in the art of children. He learned of the work of Paul Klee and found in Klee's Surrealist compositions the same fascination with children's art that marked his own painting.

Despite the obvious influence of Klee in Bellefleur's 1946 painting *Fish in the City*, the painting is highly original in its own right, particularly in its decorative surface. Bellefleur's multicoloured shapes, whimsical lines, and high proportion of imaginary as opposed to realistic forms are all characteristic of children's art. Bellefleur was one of the first Canadian artists to become interested in Surrealist ideas.

In 1952, Bellefleur gradually began to move towards abstract lyricism, using spontaneous processes to create abstract landscapes. Since then, he has adopted a more lyrical and non-figurative approach in his work. He often experiments with drips and splotches of paint, either by pouring paint directly over the canvas or by applying it with a spatula.

Bellefleur received a Canada Council grant in 1954, and left Canada for Paris to study engraving. He returned to Canada twelve years later. His work is found in numerous public and private collections in Canada and abroad.

Bellefleur: Bêl - flûr