

# WEEK 4: Abstract Art

(More Information and history of Abstract Art Development)

## 3-Script

### Visuals:

- **6-Paul Klee Quote**
- 7-Edward VI Official Portrait by William Scrots
- **8-Edward VI anamorphic portrait by William Scrots**
- **9-The Ambassadors, by Hans Holbein**
- 10-Naruto Whirlpool by Hiroshige
- 11-Japanese footbridge 1898 and 1922 by Claude Monet
- **12-Simultaneous Windows on a City by Robert Delauney**
- **13-Prismes Electrique by Sophia Delunay**
- **14-Disks of Newton by Franz Kupka**
- **15-Aphora (Fue in two colors) by Franz Kupka**
- **16-Tableau 1 by Piet Mondrian**
- **17-Heroic Roses by Paul Klee**
- **18-No 293 by Wassily Kandisky**
- **19- Definition of Abstract Art (optional to use, or simply leave out for parents to read.)**
- **Abstract Artist biographies and pieces, available on Drawing Demystified. (optional)**

## 14-Take Home

### OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED:

- -Paper
- -Pencils
- Colored Pencils, markers, paint, whatever coloring agents you and your director have chosen. Color is more important this week than before, so if you can, have lots of different mediums available to play with. Ask parents to bring in some if that helps.
- Timeline Card #124 "US restores trade with Japan"
- Timeline Card #99: Japan's Isolation (optional-example of Japanese art)
- Timeline Card #76: "Japan's Shoguns" (optional-example of Japanese art)
- Timeline Card #139: "Modern Period of the Arts" (optional-example of exaggeration)

*"A line is a dot that went for a walk...a drawing is a line that went for a walk."* -Paul Klee, Abstract Artist<sup>1</sup> <Quoteboard pg 17>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Klee (1879 – 1940, Swiss artist) loved music, particularly the works of Bach and Mozart (hello Cycle 1!). Originally trained as a violinist, Klee would play the violin as a warm up to his painting. One of the reasons Klee

**Tutor:** Okay, first week, we learned we can break down pretty much all images into OiLS. What do those stand for again? *[Ovals, Dots, lines, angled lines, curves]*

What is learning about anything, including drawing, about? *(The Process and progress, not always the product)*

Weeks two and three we drew mirror images and upside down. Do you remember why? *[To break the icon patterns and see the actual OiLS which make up an image]*

Do exercises like these make us more practiced and accurate in our drawings, do you think? *[Hopefully, they say yes]*

## **This week**

So what happens when an artist uses the OiLS just for fun? Let me tell you a story of art.

*[Show official Portrait of Edward VI by William Scrots <Pg7>*

This is King Edward VI (6<sup>th</sup>) of England, who reigned from 1547-1553, during the “Age of Absolute Monarchs”. This is one of his official portraits done by William Scrots.

But it wasn’t Edward’s favorite portrait by Scrots.

This was.

*[Show the “stretched portrait, (Pg 8) may have to pause for some laughter.]*

According to some historians, *this* was likely Edward VI’s favorite portrait. It’s a giant, visual trick: the only way to see it is to hang it on the wall and look at it from the right edge. (By some accounts, the artist drilled a hole through the frame at the exact right spot). Only then will the portrait of the nine-year-old prince look correct. William Scrots used his eyes and his OiLS to play a game with art. Artists liked to hide things in their art, like secret messages, or hidden objects.

Look at this piece “*The Ambassadors*”, from Hans Holbein, (Pg 9) court painter to Edward’s father, Henry VIII<sup>2</sup> (who we’ll meet in week 9 this year!) Do you see something odd about it?

*[Stretched out Skull in foreground between mens’ legs.])*

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liked Bach so much was the he loved Bach’s use of Counterpoint (Remember Cycle 1?) within his pieces. When he lectured, Klee compared the visual structure and rhythm within paintings with rhythm and structures within counterpoint and musical compositions. This particular piece is apparently a direct homage to Bach, and may have been painted while listening to Bach. Following Klee’s death, other artists have used his technique to visually compose paintings based on musical pieces. There was also a counter-movement of composers composing music based on Klee’s visual works!

<sup>2</sup> Reigned 1509 – 1547; An Absolute Monarch of England, we ran into him during Cycle 2’s History sentence on Week 9.

This stretched out skull is made by the same technique Edward VI's portrait was: Anamorphosis<sup>3</sup>. (*ana-morf-O-sis*) Something is stretched to the point where you can't see what it is unless viewed from a specific angle, and then the art almost seems to "POP" out of the walls!

Some historians think this portrait may have been painted for a stairwell, and you wouldn't see the skull unless you were going up or coming down the stairs! Some of the things on the table between the men have hidden meanings too. So artists always liked to play with their art, but they also had to be accurate and draw things realistically, because that was what people were paying them to do.

Fast forward 300 years and two things would rock the art world.

The first was a new invention that's so common now, most of us use it every day. It's included in most phones, many devices, and some are so small, we don't notice them. Any idea what it is?

*[Photograph/Camera]*

With photography, the need and nature of art changed. Need a portrait of grandma? Forget the painter, go to a photographer and get it done cheaply and quickly! Suddenly, artists had fewer people purchasing portraits, and things like that, and had to find something else to do.

The second great event in the art world was the US (and the rest of Europe) restoring trade with Japan.

*[You can use the timeline card here (#124-Week 18)]*

Some of the first items to be traded back and forth was artwork. Both regions influenced each other. In the Western World, Japan's use of bright colors, flattened perspective, and stylized art was very different from what the West had been doing. Japanese artists wanted to capture "the perfect moment", and many of their paintings looked flatter, but more dream-like.

*<Show Hiroshige's Print "Whirlpools are Naruto" (Pg 10) or one of the Timeline cards that show Japanese art like "Japan's Isolation" (Card #99-Week 15) or "Japan's Shoguns" (Card #76-Week 11) >*

So Western artists, freed from compositions that required accuracy, began to openly play with their art to capture emotions, beauty, anything, without needing to attach it to any particular realistic object. With the success of Japanese and Chinese art, merchants began to import<sup>4</sup> artwork from cultures in Africa, the Pacific, and the Native cultures of the Americas. These pieces, which often featured bold patterns and exaggerated features, directly impacted artists like Picasso.

You can watch abstract art develop with Impressionist artist Claude Monet, who we meet the year in Cycle 2's artist series! Monet tried to capture an "impression" of a place and time. He

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<sup>3</sup> Greek: "Ana", which can mean "again" or "anew", and "Morph" - form, so "To form anew" or more simply, "transformation"

<sup>4</sup>Artwork was also forged, stolen and smuggled, but that's an issue for another time.

loved Japanese art so much, he built a Japanese garden in his home, and painted this bridge, many times. This is the bridge painted in 1899. <Show double bridge compositions, Pg11>

But you can see, twenty years later, he's playing with shapes and colors so much that, unless you know from the title that is the same bridge, it just looks like whirls of color.

Other artists played with shapes, like Robert Delaunay , [Ro-BEAR De-LOON-ay] with his *Simultaneous Windows on the City*, <Pg 12> Or his wife, Sophie with her *Prismes Electriques*. <Pg 13> Their friend Franz Kapka [Franzz KAP-ka] did two paintings in this collection-this one, *Disks of Newton*, <Pg 14> is a study, or painting he did to prepare for this one, *Amphora, Fugue in two Colors*. <Pg. 15> See how they all just played with shapes and colors?

<Give a few minutes for observations>

Others played with shapes and colors in a different fashion, like Piet Mondriaan, [Pi-ET Mon-dree-AN] with his *Tableau 1*. <Pg 16> Sometimes, there was a recognizable element to abstract art, like this, Paul Klee's *Heroic Roses*, <Pg 17> where you can see the swirls of the rose hidden in the forms. Klee also liked to paint while listening to music like his piece in today's quote, which is based on Bach's counterpoints (remember that from Cycle 1 last year?) . Or look here at our "Modern Period of the Art" timeline card.

<Show Timeline Card #139: Modern Period of the Arts>

This is Umberto Boccioni's [Um-BEAR-to Bot-CHO-nee] sketch called "The City Rises" painted in 1910, as preparation for his final painting by the same name. Do you see the red horse hidden among the flowing lines?<sup>5</sup> He's exaggerated and partially hidden this animal among the furious background. Artists are still hiding things in their works, just like Holbein!

Other times, like this composition, there's not even a name to help us understand what the artist was expressing. Wassily Kandinsky's (Va-SIL-y Kan-DIN-ski) called this piece *No. 293* <Pg 18>

**Abstract artists communicate or create something using shapes and colors without trying to copy something realistically!**

**Why is it called "Abstract Art?" Abstract comes from a Latin word "Abstrahere", meaning "to detach" or "pull away from". Abstract art is detaching from "reality" and just playing with their materials!**

So today, just play with your OiLS—play with shapes—what does a lot of triangles look like?

If you painted "Happiness" or "Fury" or "Sadness", what colors would you use? What shapes?

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<sup>5</sup> To find the horse, look in the lower left hand quadrant of the cropped painting on our card. You should see the dark colored bridle with blinders/blinkers and lower jaw and nostrils of the horse. The mane of the neck is rising and curving away to the right. If you look long the right edge, you should see the hand and arm of the worker struggling to control the horse. If you look up "The City Rises" on Wikipedia, you can find the entire sketch, plus the final painting.

Draw nothing in particular-draw everything together.

If one of these compositions inspired you, take it to your seat to work your own version of it. Just play with your art.

*<If you printed off the abstract artists bios, be sure to make those available too for parents and kids to have fun with. This is a great week to encourage parents to spread their wings, because there literally, is no wrong answer!>*

### **Review:**

Learning anything, including drawing, is about (Process, not Product)

How to Abstract Artists Communicate in their art? <Through shapes and colors, not copying something "realistically">

### **WHY ABSTRACT ART?**

First, it gives an easy "win" for the student. This is something fun, light, and somewhat easy. There is hardly a way to "incorrectly" do abstract art. (Abstract artists would say their work is NOT easy, but that's another argument for another day...)

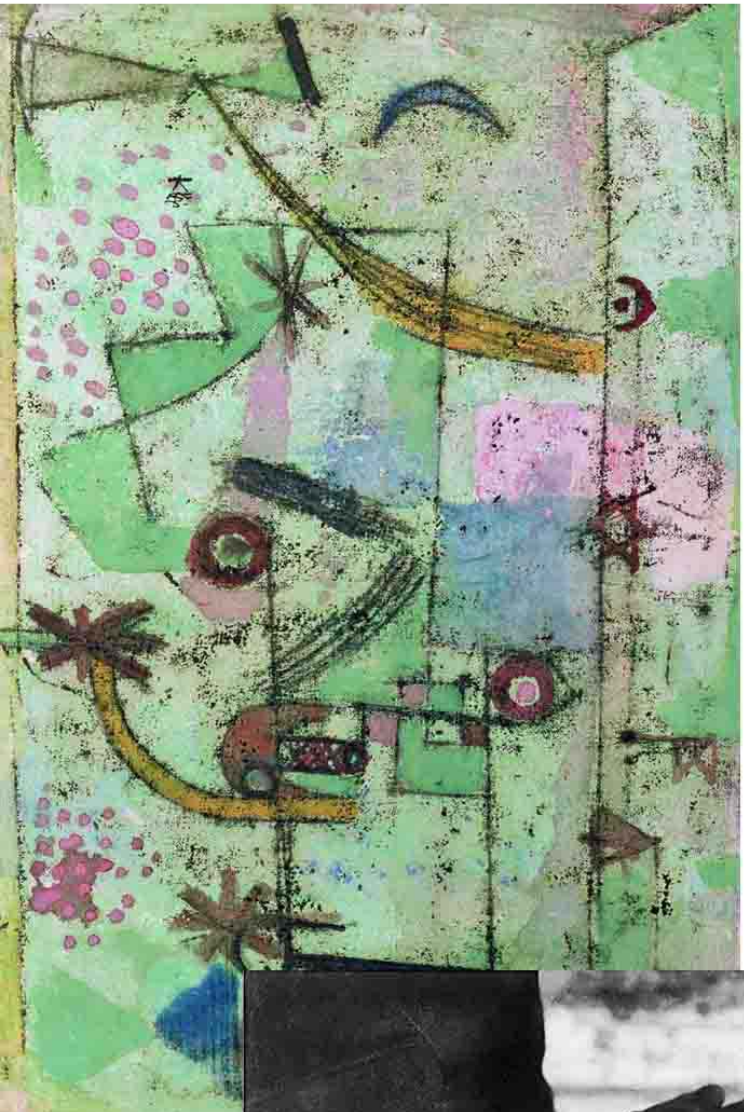
Secondly, it broadens our idea of what art "can" look like, and therefore, broadens our internal idea of what "real art" looks like, including our own.

Also, it gives an opportunity to freely experiment with different art mediums, or different ideas without having the measure up to something "real". This sort of encouraged, open-ended experimentation (with no "right" or "wrong" at the end) is good practice for later problem solving of complex issues (with no clear "right" or "wrong" result, just "does it work or not?"). Trying to "see" what happens and see what the result looks like with not internal judgmental monitor is an essential skill to have in order to solve more complex problems later.

Finally, having an idea of what abstract art can look like can give a person an outlet for complex feelings and how to express them. Having the ability to communicate something complex without resorting to "realism", is one way to express these feelings and give them some sort of form. Being able to do so also promotes mental and emotional health.

**“A line is a dot that went for a  
walk...a drawing is a line that went for  
a walk.”**

**-Paul Klee, Abstract Artist**



Painting, "In the Style of Bach"  
1919,  
Gemeentemuseum, the Hague  
Netherlands



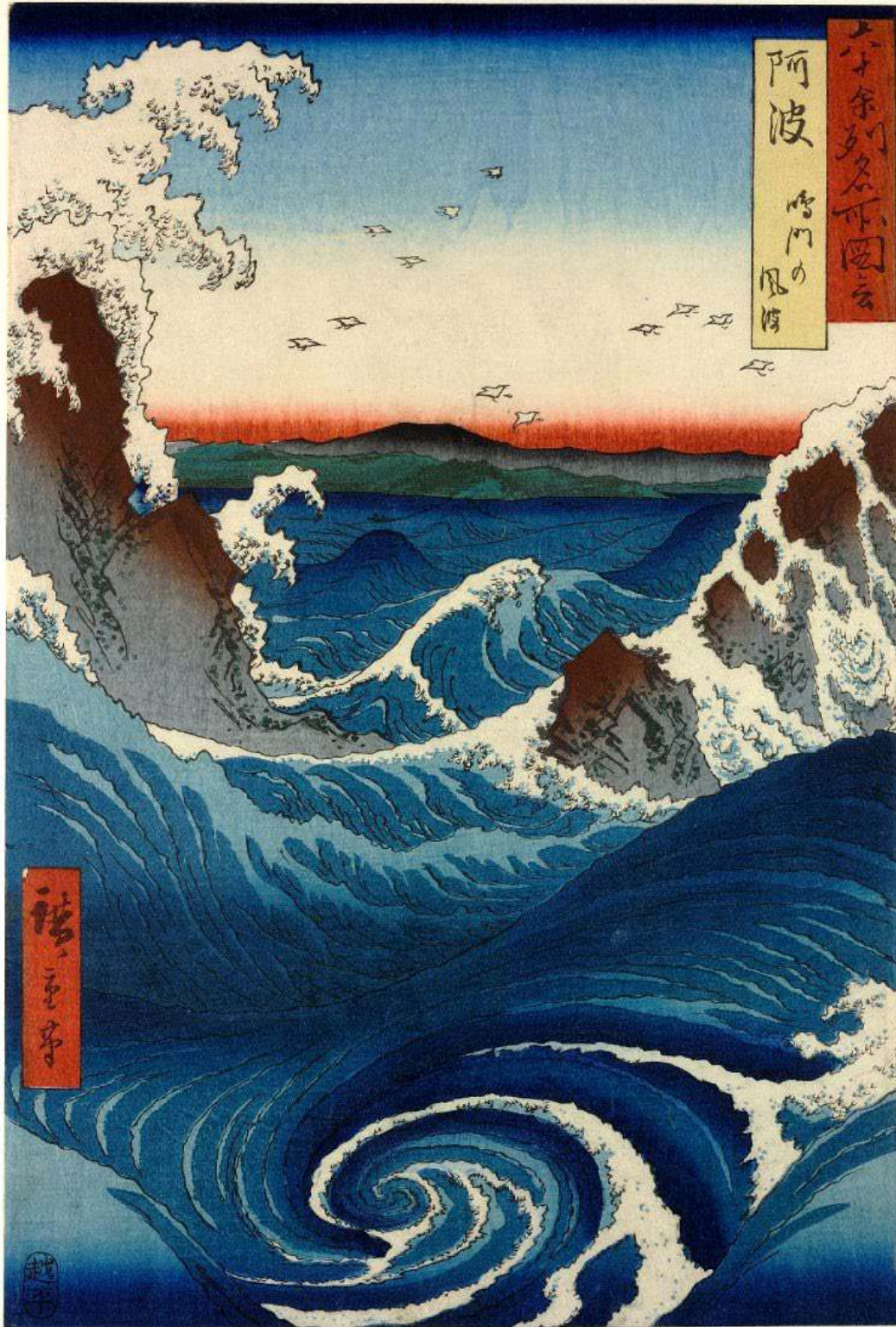
King Edward VI of England. Attributed to William Scrots. Royal Collection. Image from Wikipedia.



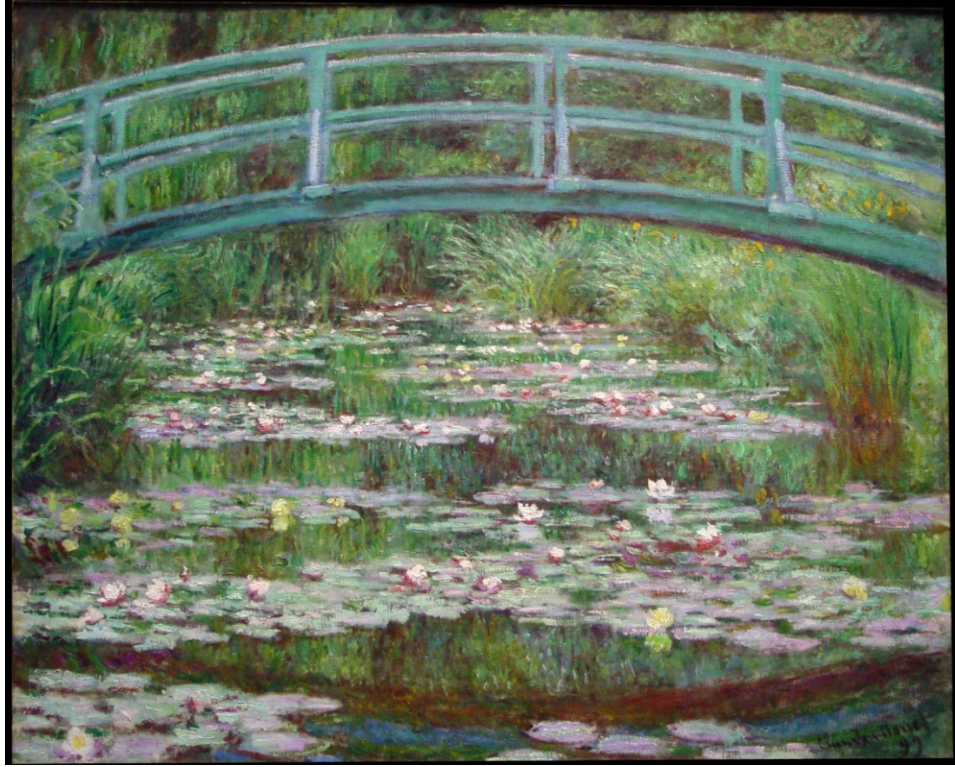
Edward VI Anamorphic Portrait. Attributed to William Scrots.  
1547. National Portrait Gallery of London



"The Ambassadors" by Hans Holbein the Younger. 1533. National Portrait Gallery, London, England.



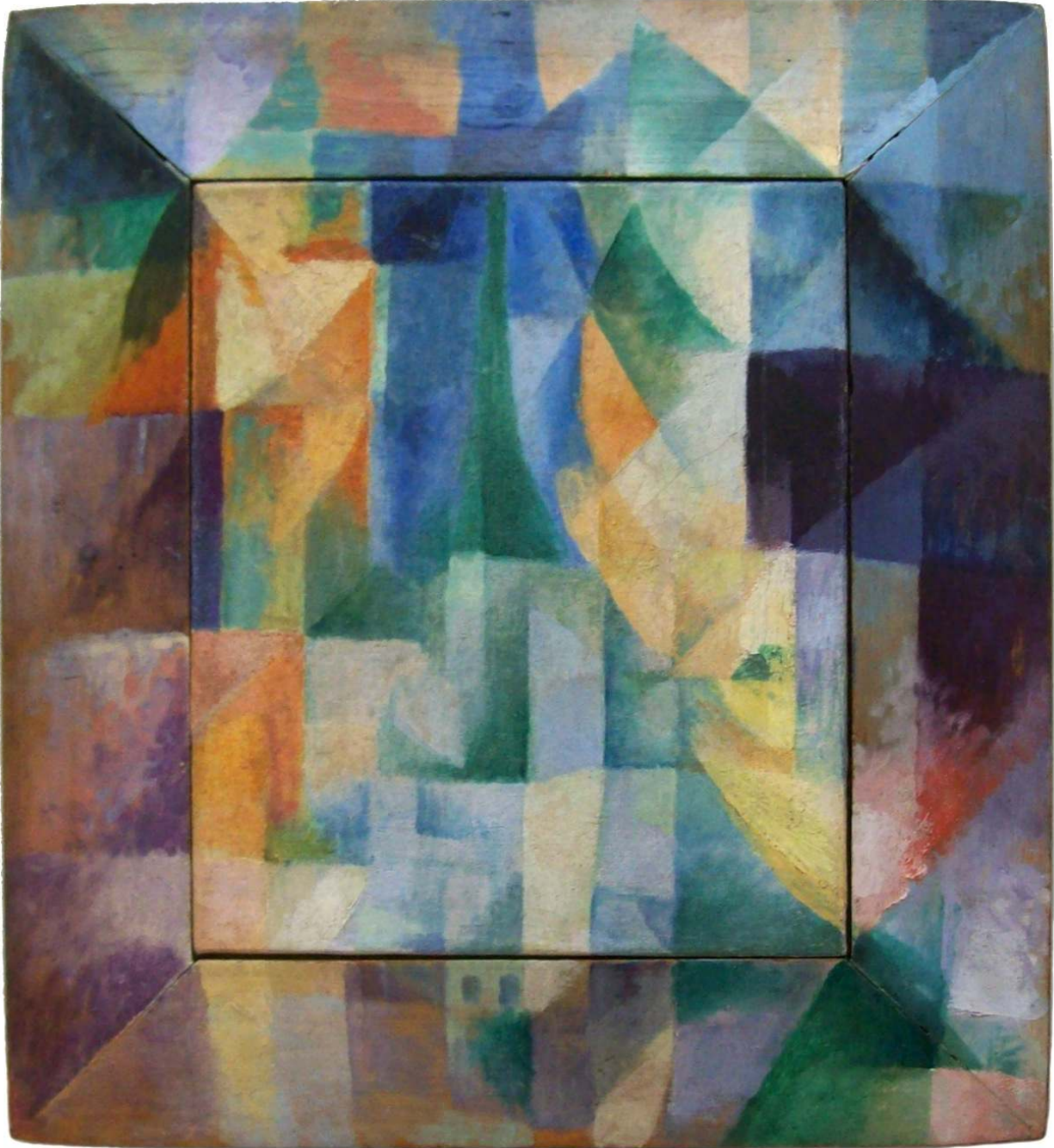
Hiroshige Utagawa (1797-1858) "Naruto Whirlpool, Awa Province" Edo Period, Japan. From Hiroshige's series, "Views of Famous Places in the the Sixty Odd Provinces."



"Japanese Footbridge" by Claude Monet. 1897. Philadelphia Museum of Art



"Japanese Footbridge" by Claude Monet. 1920-1922; Museum of Modern Art



*Simultaneous Windows on the City*. 1912 Robert Delaunay (1885 – 1941). .

Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany



*Prismes électriques* 1914 Sonia (Terk) Delaunay (1885 – 1979), ,  
oil on canvas 250 cm x 250 cm.

Musee National d'art Moderns, Centre Pompidou, Paris. France



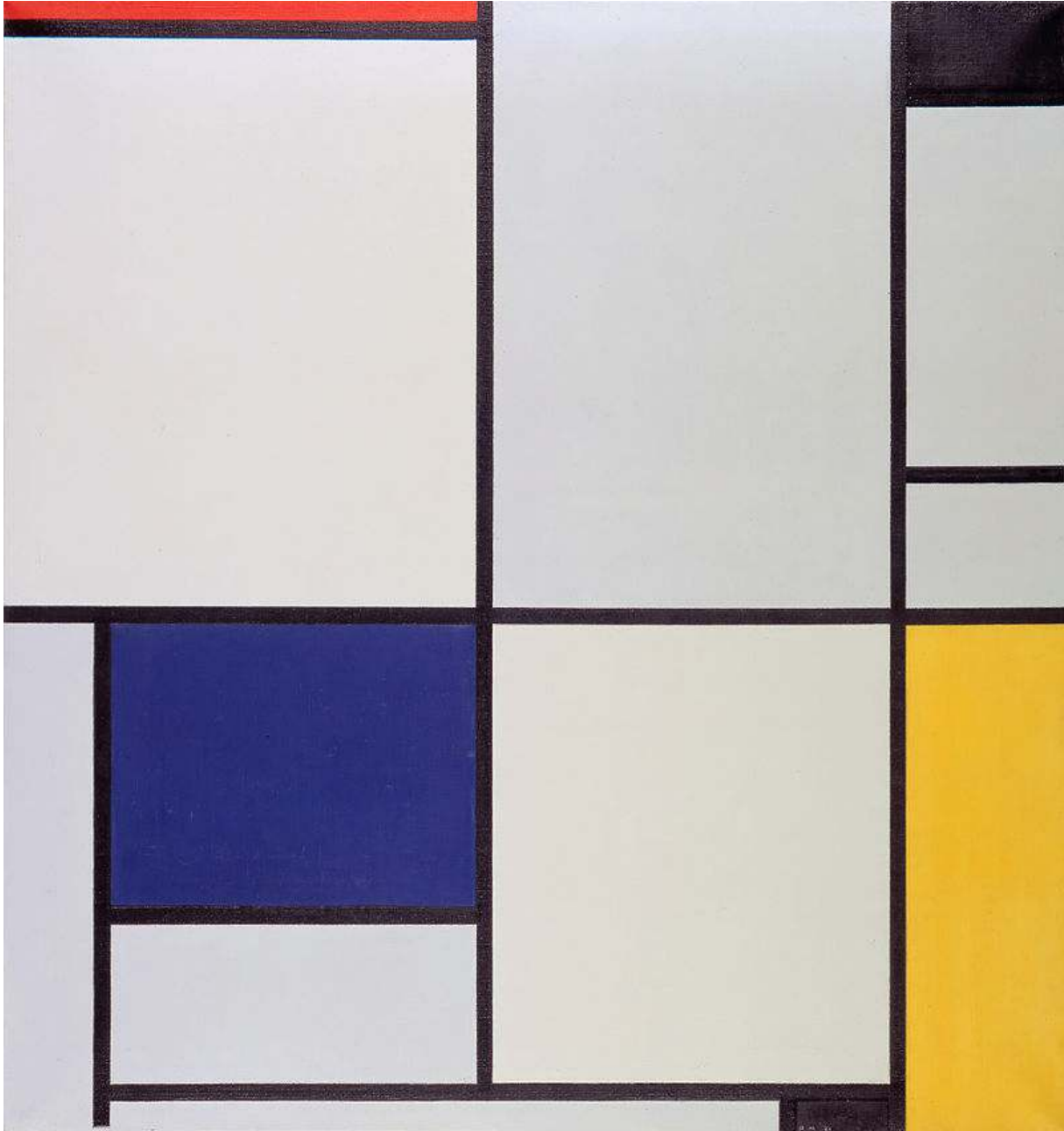
*Disks of Newton (Study for "Fuge in Two Colors) 1912, , Franz Kupka (1871 - 1957)*

(An example of the Abstract sub-genre of Orphism)

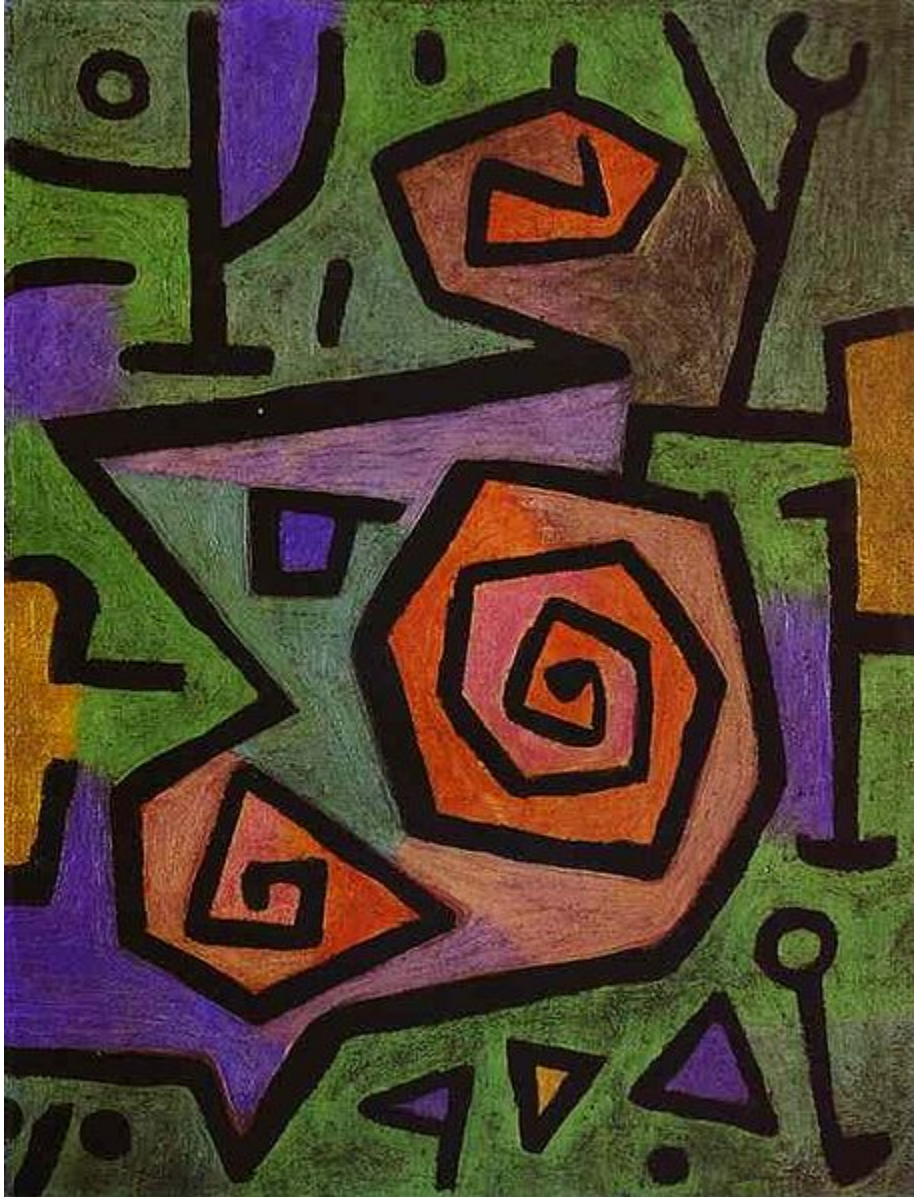


*Amorpha, Fugue in Two Colors*, 1912 Franz Kupka (1871-1957)

Oil on Canvas 210 x 200 cm



Piet Mondrian (1872 – 1944), Tableau 1, 1921; Gemeente Museum Den Haag



Paul Klee (1879 – 1940); Heroic Roses. 1938; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany



Wassily Kandinsky (1866 – 1944) ; No. 293; 1913

## ABSTRACT ART

(n) An art style which uses the visual language and techniques of form, line, and color to create a composition which does not represent a visual reality. Abstract art may explore how different colors work together, express complex emotions and concepts, or simply work freely without being constrained to reality.

### SUB-GENRES WITHIN THE ABSTRACT ART FAMILY CAN INCLUDE:

**EXPRESSIONISM** (O'Keefe, Pollock, Kandinsky)

**SUPREMITISM** (Malevich)

**ORPHISM** (Robert and Sonia Delaunay)

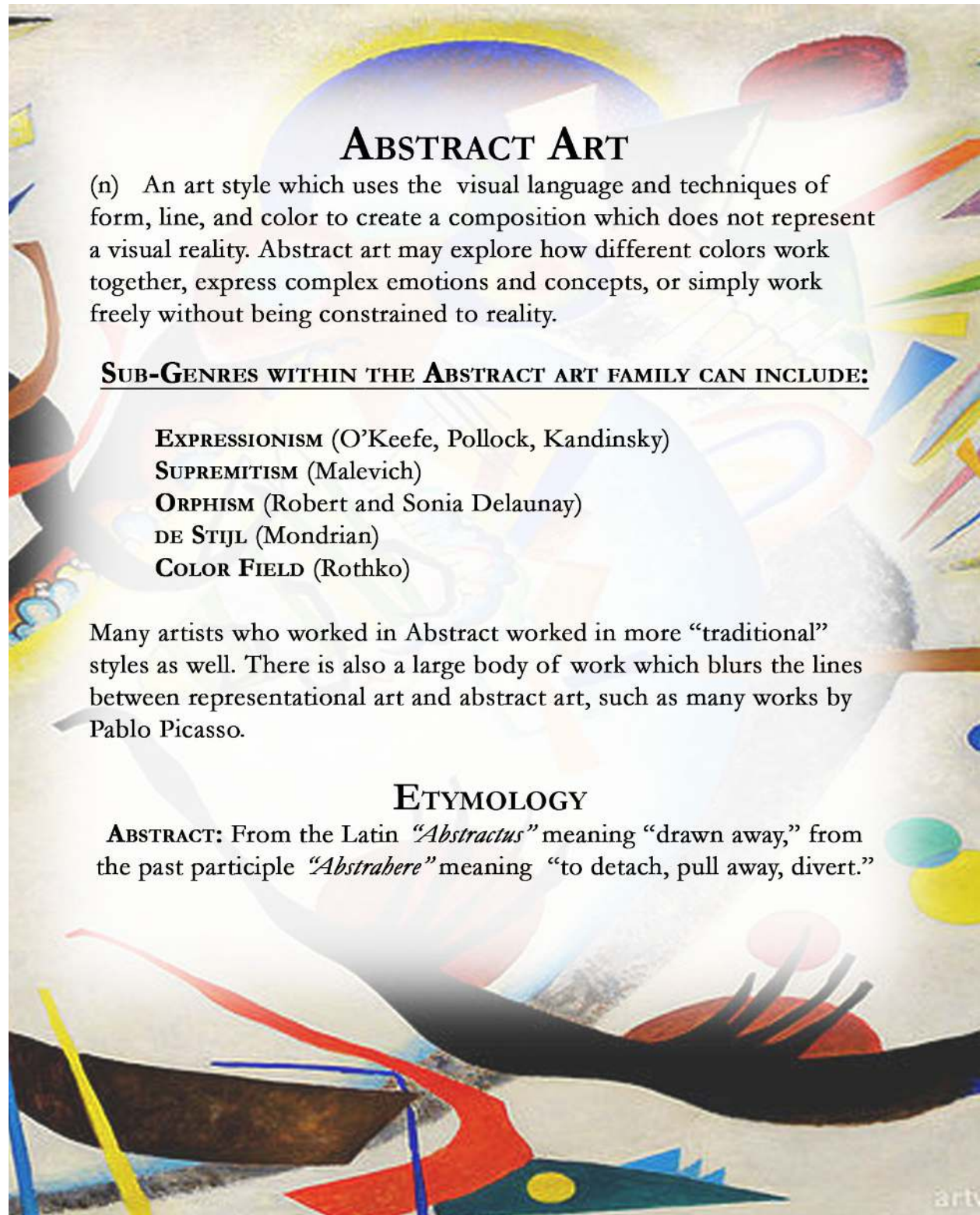
**DE STIJL** (Mondrian)

**COLOR FIELD** (Rothko)

Many artists who worked in Abstract worked in more “traditional” styles as well. There is also a large body of work which blurs the lines between representational art and abstract art, such as many works by Pablo Picasso.

## ETYMOLOGY

**ABSTRACT:** From the Latin *“Abstractus”* meaning “drawn away,” from the past participle *“Abstrahere”* meaning “to detach, pull away, divert.”



# Take Home:

Look up different Abstract Artists—use their works as inspiration during the week.

Check out “**Getting to Know the World’s Most Famous Artists**” series by Mike Venezia. Using a combination of actual works and cartoons illustrating the artists’ lives, Venezia makes the stories of dozens of artists interesting, fun, and accessible for children and adults alike!

Some abstract (and semi-abstract) artists in this series:

- Pablo Picasso (Semi-Abstract)
- Jackson Pollack
- Paul Klee
- Marc Chagall
- Henri Matisse (as he went blind, Matisse started to work in Collage, and eventually moved toward abstract-like works)
- Salvador Dali (Surrealism artist-sometimes surrealism is categorized as a fringe form of abstract art)
- Georgia O’Keefe (she actually defies conventional categorization, but some of her art is frequently categorized as abstract or within the abstract family-and we’ll meet her in Cycle 3)

As always, depending on your student, read book ahead of time-while Mr. Venezia treats subject matter such as suicide, alcoholism, drug use, ect., gently, he doesn’t ignore it either. Artists had a varied life, and Abstract Art was born during the ages of industrialization and urbanization, two world wars, and the Spanish Flu, so there may be difficult topics within any of these books. You know your child best, but pre-read if you have any concerns.

For older readers, **the ‘Who Was...’ series** has a volume on Pablo Picasso. You can also check out the Abstract Art examples and stories from [Drawingdemystified.com](http://Drawingdemystified.com)

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## HANDS ON

During the week, look at different artists and play with doing abstract art. Mix materials (what happens if you mix crayons and watercolors or markers and colored pencils? Why not glue found objects (yarn, sequins, paper, pasta) on something painted with traditional art materials. Draw feelings like “rage” or “Joy”. Draw overlapping shape and see what you see. Draw a motion-but not the thing causing it: Draw “How it feels to Bicycle or Run in the wind/ran” without the cyclist or runner.

There really isn’t a way to do this incorrectly! Have fun with expanding your technique into abstraction!