

MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

Mel Katz- Inspired Paper Sculptures

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY
DESIGNED BY MONA
EDUCATORS

Description

This activity will allow students an opportunity to see how abstract art is created through overlapping lines and shapes. Students will learn about Mel Katz and use automatic drawings to create shapes that they color and cut out to create an abstract sculptural form.

Age: Second through Eighth Grade

Lesson Duration: 35-45 Minutes

Subjects: Art & Math



Image: Teacher sample

Materials

- White 8.5 x 11" cardstock
- Permanent markers
- Variety of oil pastels
- Scissors
- Paper towels
- Ted-Ed video on abstract expressionism
- Optional: toothpicks

Instructions

- 1)** Introduce students to abstract art through the [Ted-Ed video](#). This will help to lay a foundation for the activity.
- 2)** Show students the works by Mel Katz and engage in a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) discussion with them on the abstract works.
 - VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS are included at the end of this lesson.
 - Ask students to consider how the artist might have made the drawings and/or what he used them for.
 - Share with students the following quote from Mel Katz: "Making art is about getting yourself into trouble and then finding a way out". The project today will embody this quote. Let students know that this project might be challenging or frustrating, but it is important to keep working and see if they can find a solution to problems they encounter.
- 3)** Explain that each of them will receive a piece of cardstock and a permanent marker. They will start by drawing one continuous line on their cardstock with the marker until it fills the page.
 - Demonstrate this on the board. We found it helpful to have an example of a paper filled with too many lines and one with a good amount (see next page for example).
 - Next, explain that they will look for three shapes in their lines, color the shapes in with oil pastels, and then cut them out.
- 4)** Show students how you can use paper towels to smear oil pastels.
 - Optional: show them how the toothpicks can be used to carve into the oil pastels.
- 5)** Finally, students will put shapes together by cutting a slit on each of their shapes and fitting the slits into each other.
 - Depending on the age of the students it might be helpful to have them find and cut out their own shapes before you explain this step.

6) Distribute cardstock and permanent markers and invite them to start drawing.
7) As students look for their three shapes, help them problem-solve difficult situations such as overlapping shapes, small shapes, or things not looking how they want.

- Encourage the use of multiple colors or color blending.

8) Some students might have trouble getting their sculptures to stand up. Check to make sure they are putting the two slits together.

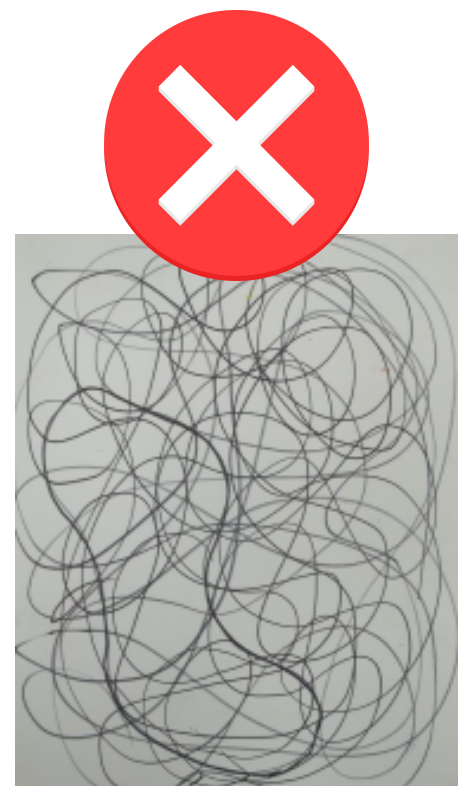
- This forms a sturdier connection. Sometimes you may also try wiggling the pieces until you can get them to stay. Show the students what you are doing and allow them to help each other.

9) Once students have finished their sculptures, allow time to share them with other students and teachers.

- Ask the students questions about the activity. If they were to do this again, what would they do differently? Would they use bigger shapes? Different colors?

Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Line
- ✓ Shape
- ✓ Form
- ✓ Abstract
- ✓ Positive Space
- ✓ Negative Space
- ✓ Texture
- ✓ Sculpture

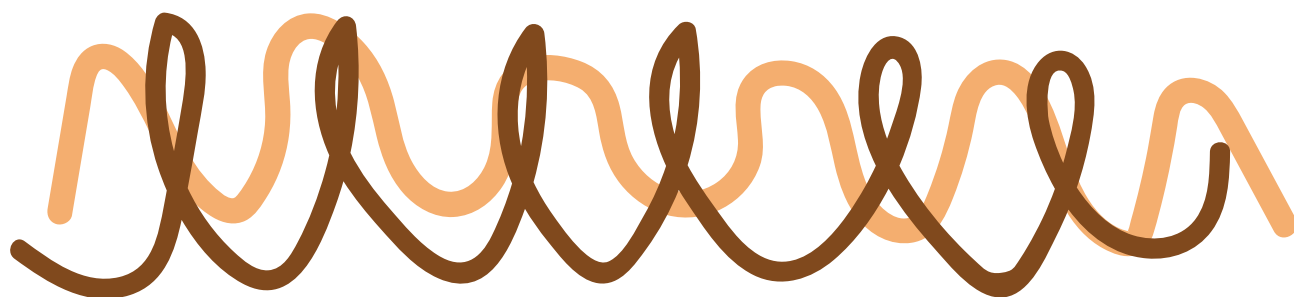


*Left: a good amount of shapes
Right: too many shapes created by intersecting lines*

Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- **Grade 2: VA:Cr2.2.2** (Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces),
- **Grade 3: VA:Re7.1.3** (Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art), **VA:Cr2.1.3** (Create personally satisfying artwork, using a variety of artistic processes and materials)
- **Grade 4: VA:Cr2.1.4** (Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches), **VA:Cr1.1.4** (Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem)
- **Grade 5: VA:Cr1.2.5** (Identify and demonstrate diverse methods of artistic investigation to choose an approach for beginning a work of art)
- **Grade 6: VA:Cr2.1.6** (Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design)
- **Grade 7: VA:Cr2.1.7** (Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design)
- **Grade 8: VA:Cr2.1.8** (Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing)



About the Artist:

Mel Katz



Image Source: Russo Lee Gallery



Aluminum Sculpture, Mel Katz, at Laura Russo

Image Source: Portlandart.net

Mel Katz (b. 1932) is an Oregon-based sculptor who creates abstract geometric sculpture. Originally trained as a painter, Katz moved from Brooklyn, New York to Portland, Oregon in 1963 to teach art at Portland State University. He is also known as one of the founders of the Portland School for the Visual Arts. Katz has been a working artist since 1953, and his art has been featured in many museums across the northwest, including the Hallie Ford Museum, the Portland Art Museum, and the Museum of Northwest 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



Aluminum Sculpture, Mel Katz, at Laura Russo
Image Source: Portlandart.net



Ribbons 1, Mel Katz, 1966,
Image Source: Collection of Dianne C. Anderson