

# MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

**Age:** Fifth Grade

**Lesson Duration:** 60 minutes

**Subjects:** Art & Math

## Name Art Silhouettes Inspired by Karen J. Cook

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY  
DESIGNED BY JONNA DUNHAM

### Materials

- *Costume Portrait and Profile Portrait* by Karen J. Cook (included in lesson)
- Video: Drawing the Human Figure
- Scrap paper
- Pencils
- White paper
- Black permanent markers
- Tape
- Windows
- Optional: Wooden posable figures



*Student Example  
Image Credit:  
Terry Smith*

### Description

During this activity, students will learn the basics of human proportions and silhouette drawing. Using the work of Karen J. Cook as inspiration, students will make their own silhouette drawings that showcase their interests and personalities. They will then add their names into the negative space of the portrait.

## Instructions

**1)** Introduce students to the concept of silhouette drawing by showing them [this video on drawing human proportions](#)

**2)** Show students the *Costume and Profile Portraits* by Karen J. Cook and use VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to discuss the artwork. VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS and a biography of the artist are included at the end of this lesson.

- Encourage students to look at how Cook uses cut out portions of her silhouettes to make details stand out.

**3)** Show students the proportions chart (included at the end of this lesson) and encourage them to use their head as a "measuring tool" to keep their portrait proportionate. Pass out scrap paper and pencils and have kids begin drawing their silhouettes.

- When designing the silhouette, considering allowing students one "prop" that would help show what was important to them (a basketball, a hair bow, etc.). Try to keep these items small to keep the project simple and focused on the human proportions.

**3)** While students are drawing, have them occasionally check their neighbor's work to make sure their proportions are accurate.

**5)** Once students have finished their silhouettes, they will work on adding their names inside. Students can add their names in any of the negative space in their portrait, but they should try to have the beginning and end of their name touch the border of their silhouettes.

**6)** To make their final drawing, students will tape their finished drawings on the window, putting a clean piece of white paper over the top and tracing with pencil.

**7)** After the drawings are traced, students will use black permanent marker to fill in the negative spaces in their silhouettes.

## Vocabulary

- ✓ profile
- ✓ proportions
- ✓ ratios
- ✓ realistic
- ✓ silhouette
- ✓ space
- ✓ subject
- ✓ composition
- ✓ image
- ✓ line
- ✓ monochromatic
- ✓ movement
- ✓ narrative
- ✓ negative space
- ✓ portrait

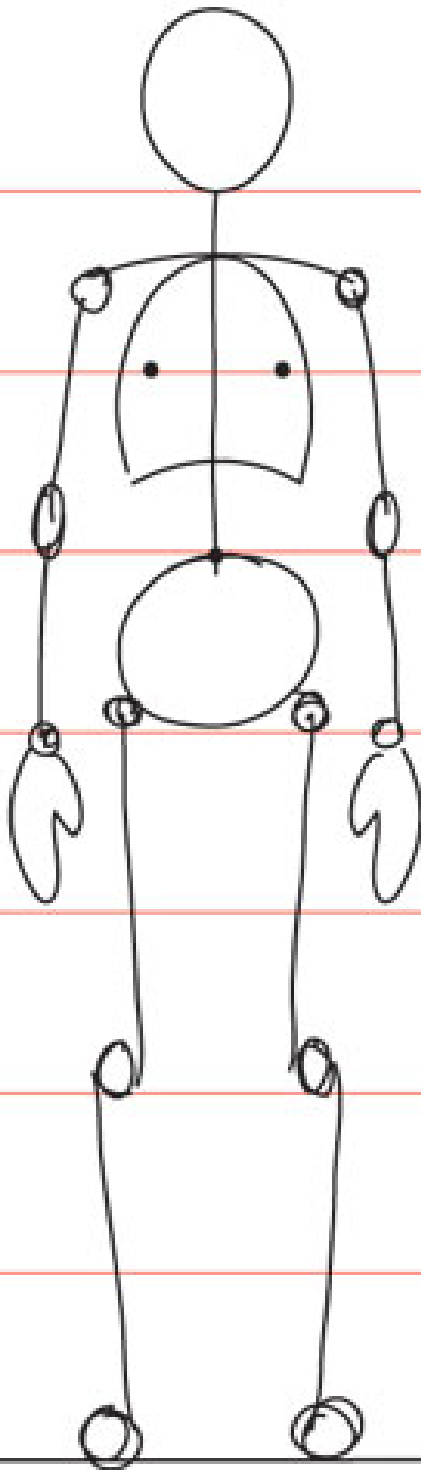


## State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- **VA:Cr2.3.5** (Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance)
- **VA:Cr1.1.5** (Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making)

## Human Proportion Guide for Reference



1. Chin

1.5 Shoulders

2. Nipples

3. Belly button, elbow

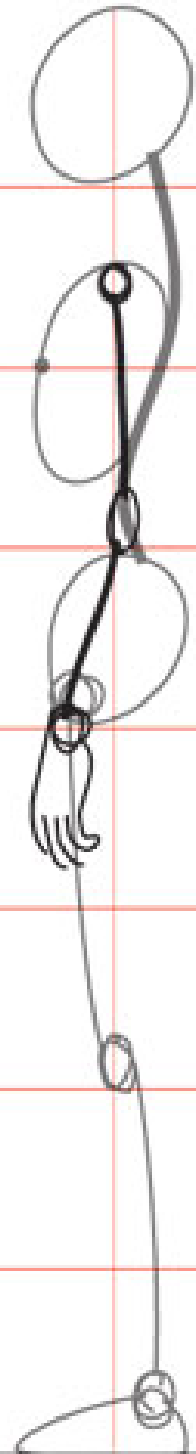
4. Hip joints, wrists, crotch

5. Fingertips (stretched), mid-thigh

6. Bottom of knee caps

7. Bottom of calf muscles (for later)

8. Soles of feet = ground



# 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](http://www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators)

# About the Artist:

## Karen J. Cook



*Karen J. Cook cutting a portrait  
Image Source: Paper Shadows*

Karen J. Cook is a silhouette artist from Seattle, Washington. Cook made her artistic debut at age 10, cutting paper silhouettes by her mother's art booths at fairs and markets. She graduated from the University of Washington in 1987 and began to travel the world, teaching English and cutting silhouettes from the Philippines to England. With over 35 years of experience, Cook continues to practice this rare art form in schools, daycares, and private appointments.

**"I really want people to be able to see their kids, to see their loved ones in the silhouette."**

**-Karen J. Cook**



*Costume Portrait, Karen J. Cook*  
Image Credit: Paper Shadows



*Profile Portrait, Karen J. Cook*  
Image Credit: Paper Shadows