

# PATTERN SELF-PORTRAITS: FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT MEETS AMY SHERALD

**GRADE:** 8-12

**TIME:** Four 45-minute sessions

In this lesson, participants will explore how artists and designers create dynamic work through use of patterns. Frank Lloyd Wright incorporated geometric patterns in his architecture and interior furnishings. Amy Sherald is a contemporary painter whose use of pattern is an integral part of her compelling portraits. Students will create a digital self-portrait using Frank Lloyd Wright's textile designs and research the work of both unique artists.

**INTEGRATED SUBJECTS:** Visual Arts, Science, Math

## OBJECTIVES

### MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Internet access for independent student research

Smartphones or digital cameras

Access to digital printer

X-Acto knives and self-healing cutting mats  
(Tip: Cardboard or mat board will also work)

Colored 9" x 12" fadeless paper

Images of Wright-designed textile patterns

Printed copies of Wright-designed textile patterns

Glue sticks

Tracing paper

Fadeless paper

1. Recognize and reflect upon patterns in our world.
2. Explore the role of patterns in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Amy Sherald.
3. Apply patterns used by Frank Lloyd Wright to the design of a digital self-portrait.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What role do patterns play in our world?
2. What patterns influenced the work of Frank Lloyd Wright?
3. How does contemporary artist Amy Sherald include patterns in her artwork?
4. What patterns inspire me, and where are they found?

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## EXPLORE

### Session One

- Introduce pattern and pattern recognition as a scientific concept using a short video: <https://thewonderof-science.com/videos/2017/12/10/cccl-patterns>
  - Optional: Encourage students to do independent research on patterns or introduce the following resource: <https://www.thoughtco.com/pattern-definition-in-art-182451>
- Ask students to use sketchbooks to record patterns they observe in the world, such as weather patterns, patterns in clothing, or astronomical patterns like phases of the moon. These may be drawings or written notes. The observations may last for the duration of the lesson or longer.
  - Optional: Assign this as homework.
- Introduce the 2017 re-release of Frank Lloyd Wright's textile patterns, which were originally created in 1955 by the Schumacher Company. Resources include <https://www.fastcompany.com/90124101/usher-frank-lloyd-wright-into-your-home-with-these-vibrant-textiles> and <https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/frank-lloyd-wrights-fabric-designs-from-the-50s-are-available-again-245583>.
- Present American artist Amy Sherald and show images of her portraits. Point out her use of pattern and the importance of the pose taken by the subject. Resources include <https://bmoreart.com/2012/11/amy-sherald-in-depth-by-joan-cox.html> and <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/09/23/the-amy-sherald-effect>.

## ENGAGE

### Session Two

- Remind students that being able to identify recurring patterns allows them to make educated guesses about future events. Ask students to discuss the pattern they have chosen to draw or write about and to hypothesize what they predict what will happen next. Examples include trends in the weather, street addresses, patterns in language, and patterns in our daily routine.
- Give students time to research the patterns that Frank Lloyd Wright used in windows, textiles, and other décor.
- Have participants work in small groups to photograph each other for their portraits. Ask students to consider the pose as a means of expression. Print the photos from phones or digital cameras in black and white on 8.5" x 11" paper.
- Instruct students to choose a Wright-designed pattern from their research to apply to a portion of their portrait. Refer to samples by Amy Sherald. Advise students to begin to consider a title for the portrait.

## DESIGN

### Sessions Three and Four

- Using their black and white self-portraits, instruct students to choose an item of clothing in the photograph to cover with a pattern. Demonstrate how to draw the clothing item using tracing paper and to cut out the shape using an X-Acto knife. Stress care and storage of knives and used or dull blades.
- Using the tracing paper shape as a template, demonstrate how to cut out the clothing from the Frank Lloyd Wright pattern choices. Instruct students to use a glue stick to attach the patterns clothing to the portrait.
- Instruct students to use an X-Acto knife or scissors to cut out the entire figure and attach with a glue stick to a piece of fadeless paper. Remind students to experiment and try several different colored backgrounds before affixing.

# LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

## CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Five

- **Have participants present their self-portraits and discuss why they chose the pose and the pattern. Have students consider:** How can juxtaposition or contrast create an interesting image? Is there tension, or do the elements feel harmonious?
- **Ask participants to share the patterns they have recorded over the course of the project. Have students consider:** Is it possible to make any predictions from the research?
- **Discuss the following Frank Lloyd Wright quote with students: “The mission of an architect is to help people understand how to make life more beautiful, the world a better one for living in, and to give reason, rhyme, and meaning to life.” Optional discussion questions can include:** What does this quote tell you about Wright’s design philosophy? Why do you think he designed textiles, furniture, windows, and other furnishings, in addition to designing the building itself?
- **Discuss the titles used by Amy Sherald for her portraits. Ask students to create a title for their own work.**