

CRUCIAL KINDERGARTEN

GRADE: 5-8

TIME: Two 45-minute sessions

One of Frank Lloyd Wright's more famous room designs is that of the Playroom, which he created in 1895 for his own children in his Oak Park Home & Studio. This room was designed to inspire learning and creativity, and his children were encouraged to read, play, create, and perform. The children of the neighborhood also benefitted from his design because Wright's wife Catherine taught Kindergarten lessons in this space. Wright himself played with a set of blocks as a child called Froebel's Gifts, which were created by the inventor of Kindergarten, and he provided these same blocks for his own children. In this lesson, students will learn the history of Kindergarten, Friedrich Froebel's vision for early childhood learning, and the impact of Kindergarten on Frank Lloyd Wright and modern artists. Finally, students will create a unique piece of art inspired by the geometric shapes of Froebel's Gifts.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Social Studies, Visual Arts

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Library or internet access for independent student research

Photographs of Wright's Designs – Appendix A

Photographs of Modern Art – Appendix B

Construction paper cutouts of any color cut in simple shapes (such as circles, square, rectangles and triangles), or Shapes Handout Appendix C

Plain white construction paper

Glue

1. Introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and other modern artists and architects.
2. Learn about Friedrich Froebel, Froebel's Gifts, and Froebel's vision for Kindergarten.
3. Understand how modern artists were influenced by their experiences in Kindergarten using Froebel's Gifts.
4. Create a Wright-inspired design for a building using basic geometric shapes.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What was Froebel's goal in creating Kindergarten classes and learning tools? What was his vision for early childhood development?
2. How was Wright's work inspired by Froebel and Kindergarten? How were other modern artists influenced by their Kindergarten experiences?
3. How can we encourage future generations to think creatively and mathematically?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his designs. Show Wright works such as the Robie House, Fallingwater, and the Guggenheim.** (Images can be found in Appendix A or at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multi-media>.) **For each photograph, pause and ask students what shapes they see within the design of each building. Ask students how they think geometry influenced Wright's designs.**
 - Optional Extension: Display images of the architecture of Le Corbusier and Buckminster Fuller, discussing the strong geometry in those works as well.
- **Next, show photographs of the artwork of the modern artists Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky and Walter Gropius. Ask students how they think geometry influenced the selected modern artists.** (Images can be found in Appendix B.)

ENGAGE

Session One

- **Introduce Friedrich Froebel and his theories about early childhood learning. Have students read the article "Inheriting Froebel's Gifts" or listen to the podcast version. Both are available at <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/inheriting-froebels-gifts>** (Optional: this can be assigned as homework.)
- **Divide students into two groups. Instruct students to stand in two concentric circles facing each other. Begin a discussion of the text using the questions below. After students have had a few minutes to discuss a question, tell students to move either to the left or the right by 1-3 students so that they have a new discussion partner. Continue to discuss and rotate partners as you ask the following discussion questions.**
 1. What influenced Friedrich Froebel to create Kindergarten and Froebel's Gifts?
 2. How do Froebel's Gifts encourage young children to think abstractly?
 3. How was Frank Lloyd Wright inspired by Froebel's Gifts?
 4. What evidence shows you that modern artists were influenced by Froebel's Gifts?
 5. Why do you think Walter Gropius's first hire at the Bauhaus School was a Kindergarten teacher?
 6. Kindergarten was banned in Prussia in the 1850s. What are some possible reasons Kindergarten was considered controversial?

DESIGN

Session Two

- **Inform students that just like Wright and modern artists were influenced to create using geometric shapes, now it's their turn to create!**
- **Give students colorful construction paper pieces of basic shapes. We recommend circles, squares, rectangles and triangles. These can be printed using the Shapes Handout attached in Appendix C or purchased online.**
- **Give students a large blank sheet of white construction paper. Ask students to use the shapes to design a building (either a floorplan or a front-facing view, called a façade). Instruct students to move, shift and explore with the shapes to create different potential designs.**
- **Once students have explored the shapes and have determined their final design, distribute glue so that students can attach their design to their paper.**

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Two

- Once completed, direct students to clean up while leaving their designs on their desks to dry. Direct students to walk around the room in a Gallery Walk to see their classmates' designs. Once students have seen their classmates' work, ask them to return to their seats. Then ask the following questions to discuss:
 1. What is something you liked about a classmate's design?
 2. What surprised you about your classmates' designs?
 3. What shape did you use the most in your design? How did you use it?
 4. Who or what influenced your design?
 5. Why is it important to introduce children to geometry at a young age?
 6. How can we encourage future generations to think creatively and mathematically?
- Optional Extension: Use leftover geometric shapes to create self-portraits in the style of Paul Klee.

WRIGHT'S DESIGNS

Robie House (1908 -10)



Fallingwater (1935)

Guggenheim Museum (1959)

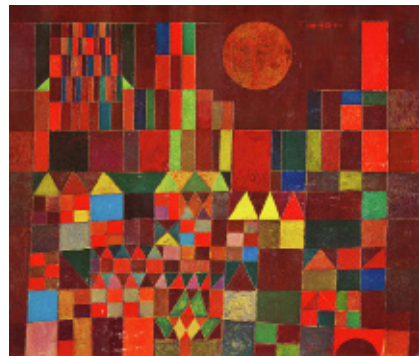


MODERN ART

PAUL KLEE

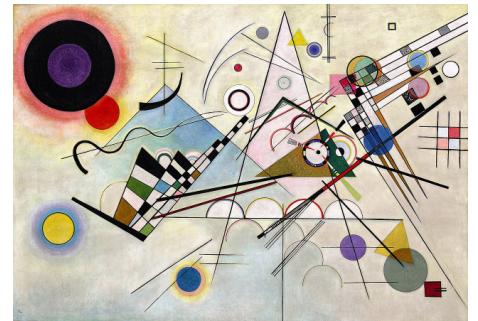


Senecio (1922)



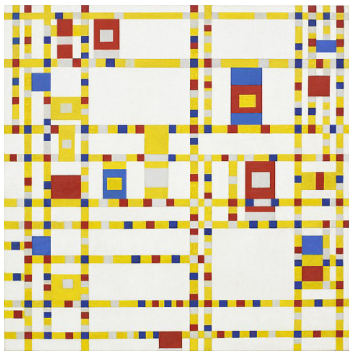
Castle and Sun (1928)

WASSILY KANDINSKY

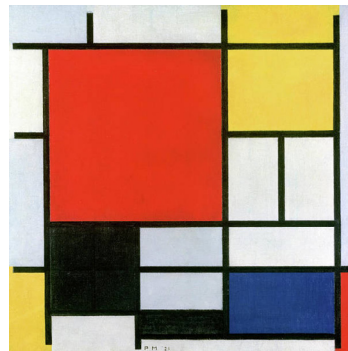


Composition 8 (1923)

PIET MONDRIAN



Broadway Boogie-Woogie (1943)



Composition with Large Red Plane, Yellow, Black, Grey and Blue (1921)



Color Study, Squares with Concentric Circles (1913)

WALTER GROPIUS



Bauhaus Dessau (1925)

SHAPES HANDOUT

