Three Little Birds



Created by Sandi Arthur

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OVERVIEW

Project Description

In this Charley Harper inspired mixed-media project, students will practice painting graduated color progression on paper then cut out simple shapes and reassemble them to create a collage of three birds.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn about the art and conservation of Charley Harper.
2. Students will create graduated color progression to better understand color mixing.
3. Students will practice combining simple shapes to make complex, recognizable forms.
4. Students will learn about collage and practice fine motor skills using scissors.

Supplies

Per Student:

- 1 piece of black Strathmore Artagain paper 400 series (60 lb), 12” x 18” cut in half the long way
- Three-quarter sheets of 9” x 12” acrylic artist paper (130lb)
- 1 pair scissors
- 1 “ Flat brush
- White colored pencil
- Black fine tipped Sharpie
- Pencil
- 1 sheet of copy paper
- AAYF Label

Shared:

- Acrylic paints: magenta/red, bright yellow, cobalt blue
- Souffle cups/paper plates for paint
- Glue and Q-tip
- Water and paper towels

KEY CONCEPTS

Snapshot –
All about whimsy!

Color mixing
Primary vs Secondary colors
Collaging
Birds



Art Vocabulary

Serigraph: A method of printing by pushing ink through a mesh screen stencil. It is also known as silkscreen. One color is printed at a time, so several screens can be used to produce a multicolored image or design.

Collage: Comes from a French word meaning, "to glue." Art made by gluing various materials to a surface.

Primary Colors: Colors are considered primary because they cannot be made by mixing other colors.
Secondary Colors: Secondary colors are green, purple, and orange. These can be made by mixing two primary colors together in equal amounts.

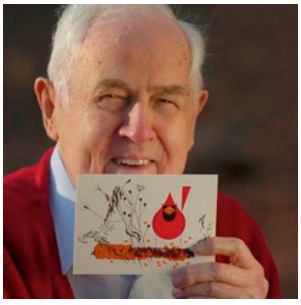
Ombre: A French word that means, "shaded," ombre is a dramatic color effect that gradually blends one color into another. It's often used in hair coloring, nail art, and graphic design.

Whimsical: Whimsical art is a style of art that is imaginative, playful, and fanciful. Whimsical art is meant to be joyful and make the viewer feel like they can step into a world where anything is possible.

Symmetrical: Having two sides that are the same. If you can draw a line down the center of something and get two similar halves, it's symmetrical. A circle is symmetrical, and so is our body.

Historical & Cultural Context – About Charley Harper (1922-2007)

Adapted from the Charley Harper Art Studio Website:



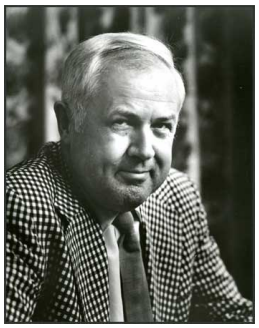
- **Education in art:** Reared on a West Virginia farm, Charley Harper developed an early appreciation and love of animals as well as design. He attended West Virginia Wesleyan College and graduated from the Cincinnati Art Academy, where he also taught for many years.

- **Beyond the realistic:** Gradually, Harper began to lose his interest in realism. "I felt shackled by the laws of perspective and shading and decided that the constant attempt to create the illusion of three dimensions on the two-dimensional plane of the picture was limiting me as an artist. Realistic painting persuades the viewer that he is looking into space rather than at a flat surface. It denies the picture plane, which I affirm and use as an element of design. Wildlife art has been dominated by realism, but I have chosen to do it differently because I think flat, hard-edge and simple."

- **Highly stylized and colorful animals:** Harper an alternative way of looking at nature. His serigraphs were large expanses of rich color, which gave the viewer a very different perspective on the animal kingdom. A conservationist as well as an artist, Harper revealed the unique aspects of his wildlife subjects through highly stylized geometric reduction. Harper said he was "the only wildlife artist who has never been compared to Audubon," yet his wildlife art was just as instructive.

- **Humor and playfulness:** Harper laced his lessons with humor. He believed that humor made it easier to encourage changes in our attitudes and awareness of environmental concerns. There was a rare and delightful playfulness in Harper's artwork.

- **Graphic genius:** Harper said, "When I look at a wildlife or nature subject, I don't see feathers, fur, scapulars or tail coverts—none of that. I see exciting shapes, color combinations, patterns, textures, fascinating behavior and endless possibilities for making interesting pictures. I regard the picture as an ecosystem in which all the elements are interrelated, interdependent, perfectly balanced, without trimming or unutilized parts; and herein lies the lure of painting: In a world of chaos, the picture is one small rectangle in which the artist can create an ordered universe."



- **Creatures big and small:** In his artwork, Harper imaginatively investigated the similarities between human and wild animal behaviors, but completely without anthropomorphism. "I learn as much as I can about the creatures that interest me, and they all do. I observe them and find out how they interact with each other and their environments and ask myself, 'What if?'"

THE PROJECT



Project Steps:

At the start: Before beginning, make sure each piece of black paper has an AAYF label. Have students write their names and teacher's name on the lines. For TK-K, Docents and Helping Hands should write names during setup.

Step One: Using a 1" flat brush and making strokes side to side, make 3 graduated color rectangles as shown: One blue to yellow, one yellow to red and one red to blue.

Make sure kids start with one pure/primary color and go about 1/4 of the way, then dip a little in that same color, plus the new color and continue. Finally, dip in the second color and finish out the rectangle. Since we are starting the new sheet with the same color as we ended the old sheet, we should not need to wash our brushes in between!

IMPORTANT: Don't get too much paint on the paper. It needs to dry. Monitor the kids and help them go over areas that are shiny and wipe the excess off with their paintbrush or paper towel if there is a lot.

Step Two: Set aside to dry. Note: Paper will curl a bit when wet and flatten out as it dries.
While the paint is drying, talk about how complex objects are made up of recognizable shapes, and how Charley simplified his shapes to produce his animals. Look at the teardrop, the half oval, the diamond and the triangle in this red bird, for example.

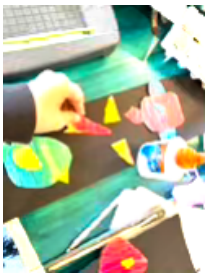


Step Three: Have kids use the sheet of copy paper to think of/try out a few simple shape birds. You can suggest they try one that is a teardrop like this one, one that is a rectangle (but with rounded edges), an oval etc. (Five minutes or less - while you walk around and check paint for dryness).

Step Four: Have kids flip over their painted rectangular sheets and draw a large simple body shape that covers about 2/3 of the space.

Step Five: Cut out the large body shape.

Step Six: Arrange the 3 bodies on the black paper, but do not glue just yet.



Step Seven: Use the remaining paper to make wings, beaks and tails for your birds. You can match the body color, or mix it up and have contrasting body elements. If you make wings, you can put the paper face-to-face and cut two together so they are the same, but mirror image.

Step Eight: Have the kids lay out their work. Maybe the bird has two wings, because we are viewing straight on, or maybe we can only see one because it is facing to the side. Tuck the tail and wings under the body if needed. Does it have any feathers sticking on its head? When it is as you like it, glue the pieces down (Put one drop under the center of the body to start, then tuck and layer and glue the rest).

Step Nine: Cut another piece of paper for the beak. Choose a contrasting color. Yellow makes a great beak! The beak might be a triangle. It might be a diamond. It could be short and fat, or long and skinny, for example. Cut it out and glue it on.

Step Ten: Add some eyes. Make a donut with white colored pencil. Add a black Sharpie pupil (Note - Sharpie does not cover colored pencil well. That's why we are making a donut shape).

Step Eleven: Use the white colored pencil to add legs and other fun details.



Docent Tips:

- There are a lot of "treasures" in your scraps! Maybe there is a beak just waiting there, or some stripes for the wings, etc. You do not have to draw or plan everything!
-Ask about left-handedness. It is important to have the right scissors!
-Monitor the amount of paint in first step. Use the paint-drying time to talk about how Charley Harper simplified his shapes to produce his animals. Field any questions.
-Encourage self-confidence and artistic expression.
-For Younger Kids**:** Have them make two birds instead of three, and shorten the black paper accordingly. Help with the cutting if really needed (They can do this!).

Helping Hands Tips:

-Please be ready to help with set up and apply AAYF labels to the back of their papers. For TK-K, write the student's and teacher's names on the label.

-Assist students with paint application and use a paper towel to wipe off excess.

-Please stay to help with clean up if possible.

-Encourage self-confidence and artistic expression.

OFF THE CANVAS

Reflection Questions - Aesthetic Valuing

At the end of the project, make time to have students reflect on their project by asking the following grade level questions. This conversation can be facilitated by docents or classroom teachers.

TK-1

1. How did you feel when you created your project?
2. How did you mix colors in your picture? Why did you choose certain colors?

Grades 2-3

1. What is one thing you learned about Charley Harper today that you didn't know before?
2. How does Charley Harper's work make you feel?

Grades 4-5

1. How does whimsical art make you feel? How is this meaningful to you?
2. What do you remember most about Charley Harper's work and why?

If time is short, the following questions are appropriate for **all grade levels**:

1. Are you happy with your project? What do you like best about your project? What might you change?
2. What do you like about your peers' artworks? How is it unique?
3. What might you title your own work?

About the AAYF Artist

Sandi Arthur believes passionately in the value of art education and has been involved with nearly every aspect of the Adventures in Art program in Torrance and with Hands on Art in Redondo Beach. She also runs an art program called Reaching Out that brings art to children in underserved schools. Sandi has always loved to create, whether it is quilting, photography, tie dye, painting or some other endeavor. Starting in 2006, when her kids began elementary school, she found a wonderful outlet through AIA and HOA and held nearly every position possible from Helper through to Program Chair, Merchandise Design, Supply Chair and has conducted New Docent Training for both programs for several years now.



“Three Little Birds”
The Art of Charley Harper

Learn more about Charley Harper and his art and get inspired to create your own with these resources at the Palos Verdes Library District.

Young Readers Section:

Juvenile Biographies HARPER, C. HOUTS. ***Count the Wings : The Life and Art of Charley Harper***
by Michelle Houts
Learn about artist Charley Harper’s life and work in this biography.

Juvenile Picture Books BURKE. ***Charley Harper’s What’s in the Rain Forest***
by Zoe Burke
With rhyming text, readers are introduced to various rain forest birds and other animals featured in Charley Harper’s painting Monteverde.



Juvenile Nonfiction 535.6 KATZ. ***Color : A Sesame Street Science Book***
by Susan B. Katz
Learn about the basics of color.

Juvenile Nonfiction 598 YOLEN. ***Fly With Me : A Celebration of Birds Through Pictures, Poems, and Stories***
by Jane Yolen
Find inspiration with this book about birds. Includes photos, facts, and stories.

Juvenile Nonfiction 702.812 HANSON. ***Cool Collage : The Art of Creativity for Kids!***
by Anders Hanson
Learn about collage art and various art elements and techniques.

Juvenile Board Book JBoard Book B. ***Charley Harper’s Book of Colors*** and ***Charley Harper’s Count the Birds***
by Zoe Burke
Charley Harper’s bright animal illustrations are featured in these books about colors and counting.

Juvenile Board Book JBoard Book M. ***Charley Harper’s I Am Wild in the Sky***
by Linda M. Meyer
Learn fun facts about birds with Charley Harper’s stylized bird illustrations.



Explore the Web:

Charley Harper Art Studio **(https://www.charleyharperartstudio.com/)**
Find information about artist Charley Harper and his work.

Inspired by Nature: The Art and Activism of Charley Harper from Cincinnati Museum Center
(https://www.cincymuseum.org/inspired-by-nature/)
Brett Harper discusses the art and activism of his father, Charley Harper.

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