

Collaborative Collagraph Printing

Level: Elementary School (two sessions)

Lesson Overview:

During this lesson, students will use a print-making process, collagraphy, where materials are glued to a hard board to create an elevated printing surface. Inspired by the work of Martin Puryear, students will explore how looking at multiple works can provide clues regarding the artist's purpose, intent and increase understanding of thematic similarities. Students will experiment with composition by combining simple shapes to create a collagraph print.

Teacher Reference: Before the class, listen to: <https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/martin-puryear>

Essential Questions:

How does looking at several of pieces work by an artist help us understand the artist's message?

How does looking at art influence my artistic choices?

How can artists use simple shapes to represent complex ideas?

What is symbolism and how can I use it in my own artwork?

As an artist, how can I communicate without words?

As an artist, how do I collaborate with my peers?

Students will...

- understand that a print is a work of art that is transferred by pressing one surface (plate) to another (the paper)
- understand that prints can be repeated over and over again to make multiples
- understand that artists explore ideas reflecting their interests
- understand that reversal takes place in the printing process
- create a collagraph plate
- create small editions of prints
- ink a plate properly and get a clear, strong print
- recognize that viewers bring prior knowledge to their interpretations of a work of art
- understand that artist often work with a group of people to execute their work

Materials:

6"x9" Drawing paper, pencils, 7"x10" heavy oak tag board (chip board), white printing ink, 9x12 multi-colored paper, non-porous tray for ink (plastic or Styrofoam), paper towels, scissors

Reference Images:

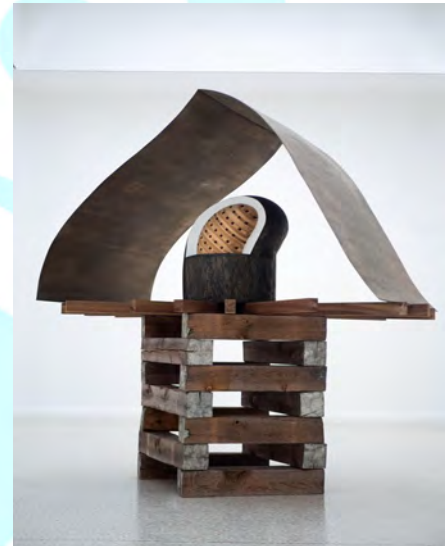
- Martin Puryear, *Cloister-Redoubt or Cloistered Doubt?*, 2019 (American Hemlock, Eastern white pine, tulip poplar, red cedar- sculpture)

- Martin Puryear, *Profile*, 2002 (soft ground etching with drypoint on wove paper- print)
- Martin Puryear, *Face Down*, 2008 (bronze- sculpture)
- Martin Puryear, *Vessel*, 1997-2002 (Eastern white pine, mesh, tar- sculpture)
- Martin Puryear, *Untitled (Sitting Girl)*, 1964-1966 (Charcoal on tan wove paper- drawing)
- Martin Puryear, *Rune Stone*, 1966 (soft ground etching, aquatint, and open bite on wove paper- print)

Session 1:

Session 1 - Step 1: Close-looking and Engagement

The teacher will conduct a brief discussion of the methods that artist use to communicate without using words. View Puryear's *Cloister-Redoubt or Cloistered Doubt?*. Draw the students' attention to the central sheltered shape. Ask "What do you see? What else do you notice about the central shape? Does it remind you of anything? What is the shape over the central shape and does it remind you of anything? What does a "roof" do? How does the "roof" shape add to the message of the central shape?" After discussion, note there are many possible observation-based responses when looking at abstract art.



One way art viewers understand an artist's work is by looking at multiple works for similarities to provide clues regarding the artist's purpose and intent. Art viewers take time to learn about an artist's themes and style, like art detectives.

Using the Martin Puryear works in the selected images in the Reference Images section above, focus on the head theme that is prevalent in his work to get additional clues about his sculptures.

While displaying two works next to each other, ask the students to compare and contrast the works. Ask, "What similarities do you notice about each of the works? What are the similarities and differences between the sculptures and the printed images (works on paper)? How are these artworks different than a picture of a specific person? How can simple shapes help a sculptor plan their ideas? How do simple shapes become like symbols?"

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Ask “What similarities do you notice about each of the works? What are the similarities and differences between the sculptures and the printed images? How are these artworks different than a picture of a specific person? How can simple shapes help a sculptor plan their ideas? What kind of shapes would you use to describe yourself in an artwork?”

The teacher will then tell the class that they will be working in pairs to create an abstract arrangement of shapes that describe them as a pair.

Session 1 - Step 2: Art-making

The teacher will provide the student pairs with sketch paper and ask them to discuss what they have in common with each other. The teacher, knowing his/her students should have a list of discussion questions prepared to prompt the paired student conversations. While discussing their common interest, the students should create a two or three thumbnail sketches of their design.

The teacher will explain to the students that the image that they create for their plate will be printed in reverse and they will need to make adjustments to their drawing to account for this. While looking at a teacher sample plate and print, students will also need to note the amount of detail (or lack thereof) that can be achieved through the process. Students should keep in mind that only the flat surfaces of their work will print and there will not be “details”.

Students will use pencils and drawing paper (6”x6”) to experiment combining shapes based on things that they particularly enjoy or that are important to them. Once the students have found a composition that they are satisfied with, they should redraw it on the oak tag paper (or file folder) and cut it out. Next, they will glue their composition down on an oaktag backing paper. Students should be reminded that the pieces that are being glued to the plate need to be firmly attached.

Session 1 - Step 3: Reflection

The teacher will have the paired student groups discuss their choices with the class.

Session 2:

Session 2 - Step 1: Engagement

The teacher will begin the class with a demonstration of how to ink and pull a collagraph print. The teacher will show students how to squeeze a small amount of ink onto an inking plate and roll a rubber brayer through the ink until the roller is covered evenly. The inked roller is then applied to the plate in long even strokes, in multiple directions, until the surface of the plate is evenly covered. The teacher will then place a piece of paper over the surface of the plate, aligning in the center plate. The teacher will press the paper firmly into the plate and will then demonstrate how to use a baren (or the bottom flat side of their fist) to rub over the paper using circular motions and firm pressure. Lastly, the paper is carefully pulled away from the plate and the print is hung

or laid flat to dry. Students will need to be told that they will need to work quickly because water-based inks dry quickly (if the paint dries too quickly, it can be misted with a spray water bottle).

Session 2 - Step 2: Art-making

The teacher will review the steps with the students while writing them out on the board. The students will then print their collagraph plates.

Students will print plates...

- Choose paper and lightly print your name on the back.
- Place a small amount of printing ink onto the tray.
- Roll out ink evenly with a brayer, in both directions; you should hear a tacky noise.
- Don't use too much ink or it will fill the lines made by the shapes you have created on the collagraph plate.
- Place your plate in the middle of a clean piece of paper, allowing room for a border.
- Rub a clean brayer all over the entire plate to transfer the image.
- With one hand flat on the print, beginning with one corner, slowly and carefully peel back the printed sheet.
- Place artwork to dry.
- Re-ink and repeat to make multiples. Overlaying colors can create interesting effects and new, blended colors.



After printing is complete the students will...

- Wash the plate, roller, inking tray with warm water.
- Create multiples of an image by transferring the image from the plate to the paper.
- Print their image with a minimum of finger prints and smudges.

Session 2 - Step 3: Reflection

The teacher will lead the class on a gallery walk of the completed prints and discuss the artwork as well as the successes and challenges of the printing process.

Vocabulary:

Collagraph, overlap, print, sculpture, brayer, baren, oak tag board (chip board)



