

The Elements of Art: Color

Lydia Andersen, Grades K-2

Students will be introduced to one of the basic elements of art – color – through analysis of works by Lydia Andersen. Class discussion focused on Andersen’s paintings will help students understand primary and secondary colors while creating their own color wheel.

Curriculum connections:

- Art

To begin, teachers should visit the following websites to view Andersen’s artwork:

- Made to Order online exhibition: <https://troutmuseum.org/event/made-to-order/>
 - Made to Order, Andersen & Piikkila: <https://troutmuseum.org/anderson-piikkila/>
- Seventeen Weeks: Lydia Andersen: <https://troutmuseum.org/event/seventeen-weeks-andersen/>
- Lydia Andersen: <https://lydiaandersen.com/>

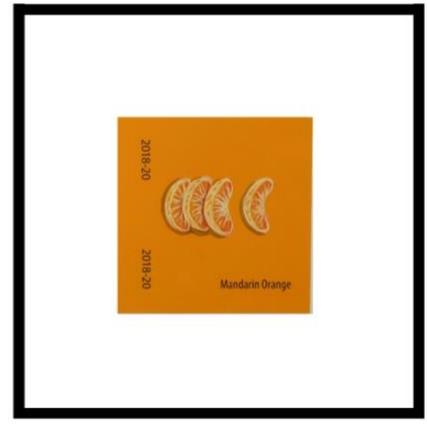
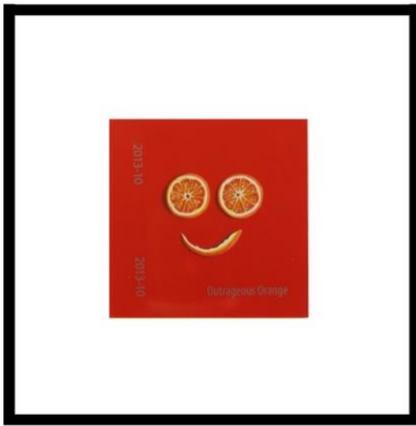
Materials:

- Computer, iPad, or other device that has a Wifi connection
- Pencil with eraser
- White paper
- Crayons
- Copies of the “Colorful Language” worksheet from the National Gallery of Art (optional): <https://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/Education/learning-resources/lessons-activities/elements-of-art/color-worksheet.pdf>



Artist Biography: Lydia Andersen is a painter living in Appleton, Wisconsin.

“For the last four years, my studio has focused on an ongoing project entitled “The Paint Chip Series.” These series consist of painting miniature acrylic paintings on commercial paint chips inspired by each paint chip’s color and name. The sizes range between 2 and 4 inches before framing and the subject matter is varied; from fruits and veggies, to plants, animals, landscapes, other foods and more. Overall the series draws attention to and is a celebration of our colorful world.



Made to Order, Andersen & Piikkila

Warm-up Discussion

First, the teacher will find Lydia Andersen's piece commissioned by Lisa Piikkila on TMA's website at: <https://troutmuseum.org/anderson-piikkila/>. The teacher will share their screen with the students and click on the image to make it bigger. Examples of questions to ask the students:

- What did Andersen paint in these paintings?
- Are they the same thing?
- How are they similar and different?

Background

Color is what we see because of reflected light. Light contains different wavelengths of energy that our eyes and brain "see" as different colors. When light hits an object, we see the colored light that reflects off the object.

Red, blue, and yellow are primary colors. With paints of just these three colors, artists can mix them to create all the other colors. When artists mix pigments of the primary colors, they make secondary colors.

Red + Blue = Purple
Red + Yellow = Orange
Blue + Yellow = Green

Did you know that your computer screen also works by using three primary colors? But here, since the colors are light from the monitor and not paints, the three primaries are not the same. Instead, your computer screen mixes the colors from red, blue, and green.

One important thing painters know: using complementary colors – the ones across from each other on the color wheel (red-green, blue-orange, and yellow-purple) – make both colors seem brighter and more intense. They seem to vibrate and pop out at you, the viewer.

Warm colors – reds, yellows, oranges, and red-violets – those of the fire and the sun. They appear to project. Cool colors – blue, blue-greens, and blue-violets – are those of ice and the ocean. They appear to recede.

Guided Practice

To get students thinking about color and the moods or feelings that colors can convey, read a book that focuses on color, such as *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt: <https://www.worldcat.org/title/day-the-crayons-quit/oclc/809925949>

Then view the below artwork to introduce students to Lydia Andersen and the way she uses color in her paintings.

- Made to Order online exhibition: <https://troutmuseum.org/event/made-to-order/>
 - Made to Order, Andersen & Piikkila: <https://troutmuseum.org/anderson-piikkila/>
- Seventeen Weeks: Lydia Andersen: <https://troutmuseum.org/event/seventeen-weeks-andersen/>
- Lydia Andersen: <https://lydiaandersen.com/>

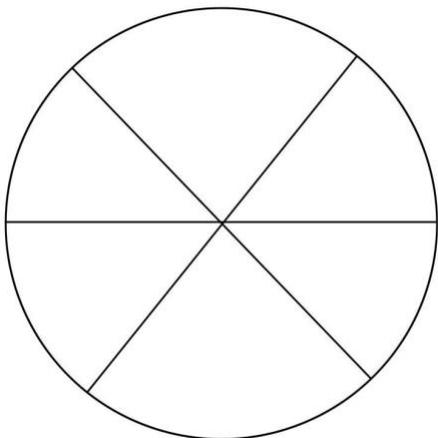
For the last four years, Lydia Andersen’s studio practice has focused on an ongoing project entitled “The Paint Chip Series.” This series consists of painting miniature acrylic paintings on commercial paint chips inspired by each paint chip’s color and name. I began this body of work unexpectedly after a routine trip to my local hardware store where I saw the display of colorful swatches and thought “Hmmm.....these might be nice to paint on.” Though I didn’t pay much attention to the names of the paint colors at first, I quickly realized that the name was inherently the color and therefore should be illustrated. Since then I have challenged myself to the task of illustrating as many paint color names as possible and though I have painted hundreds and hundreds of them I still have not run out of subject matter. I find it a bit funny, even ironic, that I have found such creative freedom in a project that is centered around such simplistic guidelines – pick a color then paint what it says.

Questions to ask students while looking at Andersen’s work:

- Describe the colors. How are they different from what you see in nature?
- How big do you think her paintings are? Most are actually only 4 inches by 4 inches.
- How do her paintings make you feel? Happy? Excited? Ready to go outside? Hungry?

Activity

1. On a piece of paper, ask each student to draw a big circle. If they have a small paper plate to trace, even better.
2. Using a ruler, have the students draw 3 straight lines across the larger circle, so there are 6 pie pieces. Their final drawing should look like this.



3. Ask students to find their 3 primary color crayons (red, yellow, and blue). Using the three primaries, only, ask students to begin filling in the color wheel. Leave a blank pie piece between each primary color.
4. If you mix red and yellow, what color would that make? Orange! Ask students to fill-in the pie piece between red and yellow with orange.

5. If you mix yellow and blue, what color would that make? Green! Ask students to fill-in the pie piece between yellow and blue with green.
6. If you mix blue and red, what color would that make? Purple! Ask students to fill-in the piece between blue and red with purple.

As the activity is currently written, students can find the secondary colors in their crayon box, rather than mixing. Alternative options to crayon would be oil pastels or watercolors, which may be easier for students to mix.

For students with visual impairments, provide a larger sheet of paper, pre-printed with a color wheel. Add hot glue along the wheel's lines to create a raised surface that students can feel.

Extension Activity

Now that students have investigated various uses of color in Lydia Andersen's work, they can fill out the "Colorful Language" worksheet (pg 1) to test their knowledge of color.

Next, ask students to select a piece from Andersen's collection that they would like to share their friends or family. What color did they choose and why? What was the name of the color and the image that is in the middle of the paint chip? What do they like about Andersen's painting most?

TMA is here to help – Email Marci Hoffman at mhoffman@troutmuseum.org for details

- Virtual exhibitions. Our online virtual exhibitions are free and for Made to Order, you can see many different colors and artists from Wisconsin.
- Virtual tours are available this fall! TMA will connect with you and your students via Zoom to provide a live tour and discussion about the artwork (fees apply).
- Meet with a professional artist. TMA can connect you and your students with a local artist who can talk to students about how they use color in their art (fees apply).