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Joan Miró

art in  
action



**Masterpiece:**

*People and Dog in the Sun, 1949*

Size: 81 cm. x 54.5 cm.

Media: tempera on canvas

**Artist:**

Joan Miro, 1893-1983

**Project:**

Color Doodles

KEY CONCEPTS

Style: Abstract

Shape: Geometric/Organic  
Positive/Negative

Color: Primary  
Mood

Design: Balance/Repetition

Line: Expressive/Outline

ABOUT THE ARTIST

- Lived in Catalonia, Spain, on the rocky coast of the Mediterranean
- Started taking drawing lessons at the age of 7.
- Lived through two big wars; painted this about 60 years ago, after the wars.
- Surrealist style is spontaneous, or "automatic", shows subconscious imagination.
- Tried different colors for each shape, taping in circles of green or blue for the sun.
- Miro also made ceramics and a huge tapestry for the World Trade Center in NY.

## CONCEPTS

Style:

- Abstract

Design:

- Balance

Composition

Repetition

Line:

- Expressive

Outline

Straight/Curving

Shape:

- Geometric/  
Organic
- Positive/Negative

2-D

Proportion: facial

Color:

Primary

Mood

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR KEY CONCEPTS

**How did Miró draw these funny people?**

Miró drew from his imagination. He closed his eyes and made lines automatically, without looking at what he was drawing. In an automatic drawing, accidental lines become shapes.

**How many people are in this painting?**

Miró arranged lines and colors into a balanced composition, and then turned his abstract doodles into a story with two people. These abstract figures have arms, legs, heads, and bodies. They don't look like real people. There is one figure standing upright and another that is upside down. There are also other figures at the bottom of the picture.

**How do lines make a story in this picture?**

Miró drew expressive lines and shapes with his eyes closed. After he drew several lines, he opened his eyes and added other lines. Then he filled in some spaces with expressive colors. The doodles are whimsical, or playful, not realistic.

**How did Miró balance the colors and shapes in this painting?**

The circular sun is balanced by the big round head. Many black lines outside of the figures are balanced by the red sun. The two bodies balance each other. Black and red are balanced throughout the picture. The blue and red are balanced in the multicolored dress. Repetition of the color red keeps our eyes moving around the painting.

**How are Miró's figures different from real people?**

Most of the figures are irregular, organic shapes. One is bean shaped with long curving arms and a triangular skirt. Another is bell shaped with candy cane legs and puffy arms. We see geometric shapes in the circular heads, eyes, and sun.

**Why does Miró leave some shapes as negative spaces?**

The colorful figures have positive shapes. The negative space of the large head balances the positive shape of the sun. The figure's heads are the negative, or empty space, of the background, which is the canvas he painted on.

**How do the colors create a mood in the painting?**

Miró played with colors to make the picture more interesting. He painted with mostly bright primary colors: red, blue, and yellow, with only two spots of green. The colors show the figures and make the sun important. They add balance to the picture.

## MATERIALS

- sketchbooks
- 12x18 black paper
- drawing pencils
- chalk pastels
- fixative
- wipes

## SETUP

- Cover work spaces with newspaper.
- Set out sketchbooks and drawing pencils.
- Have ready 12x18 black paper and chalk pastels.
- Have ready fixative to spray finished projects.
- Have ready damp paper towels and sponges for cleaning fingers.

## TIPS

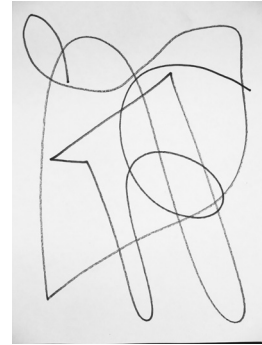
- Chalk pastels are messier than oil pastels, but it is easier and faster to add color with chalk pastels and the colors blend easily. To avoid smudging the picture, rest hand on piece of scratch paper.
- Control chalk dust by shaking it into wastebasket or extra paper.
- Guide automatic drawing of doodle while students have eyes closed. Start with drawing curving lines. After a few lines are drawn, draw straight and jagged lines. Encourage large motion. Limit amount of drawing time.
- Use damp sponge to erase mistakes or clean off smudges.



## PROJECT: COLOR DOODLES

**Sketch:**

1. Air draw doodles. Use large arm gestures to get warmed up.
2. Practice sketching doodles on sketch paper.

**Project:**

1. Draw an abstract doodle on 12x18 black paper with white chalk by automatic drawing with expressive lines.
2. Turn and rotate paper to see if any new shapes emerge from a different perspective.
3. Fill in doodle with chalk pastels, blend colors. Leave negative space.
4. Make sure no two adjoining spaces are the same color. Remove access chalk dust by tapping paper over extra paper.
5. Stand back and check doodle for balance of composition, colors, shapes, lines.
6. Add lines, organic shapes, colors to balance composition.
7. Add patterns of dots or circles.
8. If a human or animal figure appears, add Miró style eyes and mouth.
9. Write a title for your artwork.
10. Spray pictures with fixative in a well-ventilated area.

