

WIDE RAINBOW LESSONS: Artist Joan Mitchell

ARTIST INTRO:

Joan Mitchell (1925 - 1992) was an American Abstract Expressionist artist. She is one of the few female artists recognized as a member of the ABEX movement where she began exhibiting her paintings in NYC during the early 1950s and throughout the duration of her lifetime. Her artworks were expansive, ambitious and intuitive often using multi-panels painted on unprimed canvas with expressive brushwork. Inspired by landscape, nature and feeling Mitchell created meaning and emotional intensity in her artworks through an almost unconscious practice of painting with gesture and color.

JOAN MITCHELL ARTWORKS (EXAMPLES):



WORKSHOP:

In this two-part activity we first sketch a drawing by layering colors and lines inspired by artist Joan Mitchell's artwork as a study and then move on to a painting using the same intensity and expressive energy.

PART 1:

1. Choose as many as colors as you like that represent what you are feeling today
2. Using either colored pastels, pencils or crayons and some paper begin to draw by layering color & creating lines (or gestures) based on your feelings
3. These drawings can be quick, intense and chaotic OR slow, calm and cool (of course anywhere in between too) depending on your mood
4. Draw as many 'studies' as you like

PART 2:

1. After drawing we will move on to painting using paper, paint, brushes and some water (to dip & clean our brushes)
2. Check in on how you are feeling and choose the same or different colors that you used in your drawings
3. Using paint this time, layer those colors and create lines or gestures with your brush to make an abstract expressionist painting inspired by Joan Mitchell and by channeling your own special energy & emotions!

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or any paper
- Colored Pastels, Pencils or crayons
- Paint & Brushes
- Water



Joan Mitchell
Untitled, 1961

"People will never understand what we are doing if they can't feel. All art is abstract. All music is abstract. But it's all real...We are all trying to bring that spirit, that spontaneous energy, into our work."

- Joan Mitchell

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top and dark pants, is sitting on the floor in an art studio. She is looking down at something in her hands. The studio is filled with large, abstract paintings on the walls and floor. The paintings feature various colors like blue, orange, and black, with expressive, gestural lines. The floor is covered with art supplies, including paint tubes and brushes.

FOLLOW UP:

What were your feelings today before you started the project?

What colors did you choose for your drawing? For your painting?

How did it feel to express yourself through drawing and/or painting?

What do you feel now when you look at your finished drawing and painting?

How does that feeling come across to others?

Did you have fun creating abstract artwork? What do you think abstract means?

What do think abstract expressionism?

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