THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

MATISSE DIEBENKORN

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION

BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART BMA

COVER IMAGES

Henri Matisse. *The Yellow Dress*, 1929–31. Oil on canvas. 39 9/16 x 32 1/8 in. (100.5 x 81.6 cm.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.256. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

Richard Diebenkorn. *Seated Figure with Hat*. 1967. Oil on canvas. 57 3/4 x 61 3/4 in. (146.7 x 156.8 cm.) National Gallery of Art, Washington: Gift of the Collectors Committee and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Rubin, 1991.176.1. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

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OCTOBER 1, 2016

Dear Teachers,

Please enjoy this guide to *Matisse/Diebenkorn*, the first major exhibition to show the profound influence of French modern artist Henri Matisse (1869–1954) on the work of American artist Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993). As the only East Coast venue to host this groundbreaking exhibition, the BMA is delighted to offer this accompanying resource for K–12 educators.

There are a total of three lessons in this resource, and each contains the following:

- Full-color images of artworks
- Key Topics: A list of important concepts in the text
- Close Looking: An exploration of the artworks' visual elements
- Art in Context: Information on the multiple contexts in which the art was produced
- Classroom Activities: Experiences that lead students in close looking and engage them with important ideas and techniques introduced through the featured artworks
- Standards and Curriculum: A list of relevant standards from the Common Core State Standards and Maryland State Curriculum

All lessons support the following 21st-Century Skills:

- Communication and Collaboration
- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Leadership and Responsibility
- Productivity and Accountability
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills

We hope this guide will provide inspiration and helpful strategies on how you and your students can delve into the rich and powerful work of these two master artists.

SUZY WOLFFE & ELIZABETH BENSKIN

The Matisse/Diebenkorn exhibition is co-organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART BMA

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

KEY TERMS
- **Abstract**
- ***Pentimenti***
- **Picture Plane**
- **Studio**

CLOSE LOOKING: MATISSE

FROM 1906 UNTIL 1917, Henri Matisse lived in Paris and, for a time, rented a studio overlooking the southern bank of the Seine River near the bridge of Saint-Michel. In 1916, the artist depicted his studio and the view from its window in his painting *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*. In the composition, Laurette, a model whom Matisse painted nearly 50 times, reclines on a red-patterned bedspread in a small room. Evidence of the artist's continuing interest in pattern is seen in the herringbone floorboards, fringed rug, decorative molding on the ceiling, and steps to the bridge outside. In the left foreground sits a makeshift easel facing an empty chair, presumably that of the artist.

HENRI MATISSE
STUDIO, QUAI SAINT-MICHEL
1916
Oil on canvas. 58 ¼ x 46 in. (148 x 116.8 cm). The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., 1940,1307. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
INTERIOR WITH DOORWAY
1962
Oil on canvas. 70 3/8 x 59 ½ in. (178.8 x 151.1 cm). Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Henry D. Gilpin Fund, 1964.3. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Maximilien Luce, *The Quai Saint-Michel and Notre-Dame, Paris*, 1901. Oil on canvas. 73 x 60 cm. Photo: Hervé Lewandowski. Musée d'Orsay © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

FRENCH ARTIST MAXIMILIEN LUCE painted *The Quai Saint-Michel and Notre-Dame* 15 years before Matisse depicted the same subject. Luce created traditional atmospheric perspective by detailing the figures in the foreground of the painting and blurring the buildings behind Notre-Dame Cathedral. In *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*, Matisse reversed this perspective by rendering the distant architectural elements more precisely than the closer scene inside his studio.

left: Henri Matisse, Paris, May 13, 1913. Photograph by Alvin Langon Coburn, published in *Men of Mark*, 1913. Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-c4a7-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

right: Matisse's palette. Photo © 2016 Matthias Schaller/VG-Bildkunst

The interior is divided primarily into vertical, rectangular areas of color that represent the walls and window casings. The bridge, buildings, and river seen through the window are painted with blues, violets, pinks, and peaches layered over each other. The studio is darker, dominated by browns, grays, and yellows.

In his rendering of details, Matisse reverses what the human eye expects, thereby going against a centuries-old European painting practice. Rather than carefully detailing the objects that are closer to the viewer and blurring those further away, a technique called atmospheric perspective, he precisely outlined the distant buildings and bridge and used broader brushwork for the model's body, table, and tray. Matisse delighted in these plays of perspective—inside versus outside—and often painted interiors with views of other rooms and exteriors.

Matisse did not hide his reworking of parts of the composition. For example, he adjusted the angle of the window molding adjacent to the ceiling and left the alterations visible. Called *pentimenti*, these changes evidenced by traces of earlier drawing or painting under layers of paint were no accident. Matisse enjoyed the process of creating and considered *pentimenti* an integral part of the work of art.

CLOSE LOOKING: DIEBENKORN

SOME COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS in Matisse's *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel* are similar to those in Diebenkorn's painting *Interior with Doorway* (see page 11). Painted in 1962, *Interior with Doorway* represents the artist's studio during the period when he taught at the San Francisco Art Institute. Like Matisse, Diebenkorn was interested in progressions into space, leading the eye through the darkness of the studio to the sun-filled street and then to the Berkeley Hills beyond. The studio is lit, in part, by a transom window above the door on the back wall and a sash window on the right wall. These two planes meet right of center in the composition. The studio is empty save for a single chair in the right foreground. Outside, the palette lightens to one reminiscent of the peaches, blues, and pinks beyond the window of Matisse's *Quai Saint-Michel* (see page 11), with a similar layering of pigments. Evoking Matisse's handling of brushwork, Diebenkorn rendered the white, single-story, garage-type building across the way with precise thin lines and more detail than the more freely painted layering of the interior.

ART IN CONTEXT: MATISSE

IN 1889, AT THE AGE OF 20, Henri Matisse's mother gave him his first box of paints as he recovered from appendicitis. Soon after, he abandoned a career in law; he later recalled that, from then on, he had nothing on his mind but painting. Using quick brushstrokes—sometimes open and bold, sometimes fine and precise—he created figures, interiors, and still lifes with attention to lively pattern.

Matisse's palette evolved from darker colors in the 1910s to brighter, brilliant hues as his career progressed. In 1916, when Matisse painted *Quai Saint-Michel*, World War I was well underway, and his dark palette may have reflected his deep unhappiness over the war. He was personally frustrated because a weak heart prevented him from enlisting and participating in the war effort. He regularly heard bombing outside Paris from his studio, and he could not determine if his mother and brother were safe because German troops occupied his hometown in northern France.[1]

Matisse had a proclivity for reworking the same subjects throughout his career. His studio was one to which he returned repeatedly, whether it was located in Paris, Nice, or elsewhere on the Mediterranean coast.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
OCEAN PARK #27
1970
Oil and charcoal on canvas. 100 x 80 in. (254 x 203.2 cm). Brooklyn Museum, gift of the Roebling Society and Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Blatt and Mr. and Mrs. William K. Jacobs, Jr., 72.4. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

ART IN CONTEXT: DIEBENKORN

AMERICAN ARTIST RICHARD DIEBENKORN lived and worked for a large part of his career in California. He saw Matisse's work for the first time in 1943, at the home of collector Sarah Stein, while he was a student at Stanford University. Stein had studied painting with Matisse, and she and her husband had more than 100 works by the French artist in their collection. Diebenkorn deemed this encounter "life changing" and said, "Right there I made contact with Matisse, and it has just stuck with me all the way."[2]

Diebenkorn continued to study the artist's work from 1943 to 1945 while stationed in Quantico, Virginia, with the US Marine Corps. Most weekends, he visited East Coast museums, traveling to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. During a trip to the Phillips Collection, Diebenkorn later said, Matisse's work "really hit [him] hard."[3] There, Diebenkorn saw *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel* and was profoundly influenced by the overlays of bright and contrasting

Richard Diebenkorn in his Hillcrest Road studio, 1959. Photo © Fred Lyon

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
OCEAN PARK #29
1970
Oil and charcoal on canvas. 100 1/8 x 81 1/8 in. (254.3 x 206.1 cm). Dallas Museum of Art, gift of the Meadows Foundation, Incorporated, 1981.106.

colors, play of interior and exterior light and space, use of decorative elements and patterns, flattened perspective, and *pentimenti*. Diebenkorn declared that "no painting had greater impact" on his own art than *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*.[4] "That was the big one for me," he said.[5] Diebenkorn returned many times to exploring these elements by using his own artist studio as a subject, just as Matisse did.

Diebenkorn's lifelong interest in the French artist continued. Late in life, Diebenkorn recalled that in 1947, he visited The Baltimore Museum of Art, whose Cone Collection features extensive holdings of Matisse's paintings, sculptures, and works on paper—among the most significant in the world. Diebenkorn's interest led him to travel nationally and internationally to see Matisse's work. He also built a large collection of Matisse books and catalogues, into which he inserted additional reproductions and articles on the artist.

THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER, Diebenkorn created studies of interior and exterior space and light. Between 1967 and 1988, the artist painted 145 massive canvases, many larger than eight feet by six feet. He named the series *Ocean Park* for the Santa Monica neighborhood that was home to his large-windowed studios, and he numbered the canvases based on the order in which he created them. In contrast to his earlier representational canvases such as *Interior with Doorway*, the *Ocean Park* paintings are more abstract—that is, generalized in form and color. Horizontal, vertical, and diagonal planes of translucent pigment reveal erasures, changes to the composition, and accumulations of paint. Diebenkorn suggested three-dimensional space, in part, by drawing receding straight-edged lines with a ruler, a technique he began to use consistently in 1966.[6] *Ocean Park #27* has vestiges of what could be a deep rosy-brown side wall or window, hearkening back to the compositional elements of *Interior with Doorway*.

Artist friends recognized what they believed to be architectural elements from Diebenkorn's studio in the planes of color and straight lines. Said the artist,

> "There was this situation of a large, lighted rectangle, a square within it, and then, seen from the side, the transom provided the diagonal. Well there's just so many of the elements there…I remember several more astute people who visited that studio said, 'Well, look, you're painting your transom windows…. So, in a sense I was. I was taking those cues, and they were just feeding right into…what I was doing."[7]

In the *Ocean Park* series, any hint of landscape is gone; instead, said the artist, "In these works, light is the central theme."[8] In *Ocean Park #27*, Diebenkorn captured the effects of even, golden-yellow Southern California sunlight. Again, it was Diebenkorn's openness to others' observations of his work that sparked for him a new understanding

of his complex paintings. Diebenkorn said that it was when "people started to remark about the light in my pictures and how it looks like Santa Monica that I started to investigate my pictures, saying, 'Ah, yes, that's it!'"[9]

Ocean Park #29 (see page 14) is an even more abstracted composition than *Ocean Park #27*. Here, there is no sense of the three-dimensional space that Diebenkorn suggested in *Ocean Park #27* with the light-colored outline of shapes. Instead, geometric forms are flattened and appear to occupy the surface of the canvas, also called the picture plane.

The composition is dominated by two large triangular areas filled with blue hues. Diebenkorn reworked these triangles and left the changes visible on the canvas. Together, the two shapes form a blue square that may evoke the sky seen through a window, a theme that Diebenkorn, like Matisse, revisited often.

[1] Hilarie M. Sheets, "Uncovering Matisse," *ARTnews*, March 2010, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.artnews.com/2010/03/01/uncovering-matisse.
[2] Richard Diebenkorn quoted in Jan Butterfield, "Pentimenti: Seeing and Then Seeing Again," in *Resource/Response/Reservoir–Richard Diebenkorn Paintings 1948–1983* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1983), np.
[3] Oral history interview with Richard Diebenkorn, May 1, 1985–December 15, 1987, *Archives of American Art*, Smithsonian Institution.
[4] "Permanent Collection: Matisse's Studio, Quai Saint-Michel @The Phillips," accessed April 6, 2016, http://dcist.com/2008/01/matisses_studio.php.
[5] Oral history interview with Richard Diebenkorn, May 1, 1985–December 15, 1987, *Archives of American Art*, Smithsonian Institution.
[6] Dan Hofstadter, "Profiles: Almost Free of the Mirror," *The New Yorker*, September 7, 1987, 58.
[7] Oral history interview with Richard Diebenkorn, May 1, 1985–December 15, 1987, *Archives of American Art*, Smithsonian Institution.
[8] John Gruen, "Richard Diebenkorn: The Idea is to Get Everything Right," *ARTnews* 85, no. 9 (November 1986), 86.
[9] Gruen, "Richard Diebenkorn," 87.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

PLAYING WITH COLOR AND ABSTRACTION
Grades: 9–12
Subjects: English Language Arts, Visual Arts

Both Henri Matisse (1869–1954) and Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993) used figuration and abstraction to achieve their artistic goals. In this lesson, students will experiment with basic abstraction and ways to further develop abstract compositions.

Students will look closely at Matisse's *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel* and Diebenkorn's *Interior with Doorway*. Using the following questions, students will explore the similarities and differences between the two paintings. The teacher will record student responses in a Venn diagram on a white/blackboard.

- What art elements—color, line, shape, texture, and form—do you see in the paintings?
- What figures and objects do you recognize?
- How would you describe the moods of the paintings? What do you see that supports your ideas?

In response to student observations, the teacher will provide contextual and technical information about the paintings.

Students will be divided into groups of four that will look closely at images of Diebenkorn's *Ocean Park #27* and *Ocean Park #29*. In their groups, they will discuss the following questions:

- What art elements—color, line, shape, texture, and form—do you see in the artworks?
- Do the artworks resemble anything you've seen before? What do they not look like?

When students have discussed the questions for several minutes, the teacher will ask for volunteers to share some of their group's discussion. The teacher will provide contextual and technical information about the paintings in response to student observations.

The groups of four then will be asked to look closely at *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel* and explore the shapes and colors that make the composition. Teachers may suggest that students deliberately unfocus their eyes when looking at the painting so that they can see the most prominent colors and shapes.

Using a large sheet of white paper, scissors, and variety of colored paper, groups will be asked to cut out shapes of color that correspond to those in *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*. Students will lay the shapes on the white paper (used as a canvas) and reconstruct the painting's composition.

The teacher will ask students to discuss the process of "translating" the painting into a more abstract version. The following questions can be used to direct the conversation:

- What would happen if you enlarged the areas of color? Made them smaller? How would changing the proportion affect the composition?
- What would happen if you moved around those areas of colors? How would changing their placement affect the composition?

Student groups will experiment with these different configurations and discuss with the class.

This lesson can be extended by having students create abstract drawings or paintings inspired by the work that resulted from this exploration.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts
Grades 9–10
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Grades 11–12
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

MARYLAND STATE CURRICULUM

Essential Learner Outcomes
Visual Arts
Grades 9–12
Outcome I: Expectation A: The student will identify, describe, and interpret qualities of form that affect visual perception and response.

Outcome III: Expectation A: The student will demonstrate competent application of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to produce works of art in a variety of media.

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

Henri Matisse. *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*. 1916. Oil on canvas. 58 1/4 x 46 in. (148 x 116.8 cm). The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., 1940,1307. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

Richard Diebenkorn. *Interior with Doorway*. 1962. Oil on canvas. 70 3/8 x 59 1/2 in. (178.8 x 151.1 cm). Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Henry D. Gilpin Fund, 1964.3. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Maximilien Luce, *The Quai Saint-Michel and Notre-Dame, Paris*, 1901. Oil on canvas. 73 x 60 cm. Photo: Hervé Lewandowski. Musée d'Orsay © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

Henri Matisse, Paris, May 13, 1913. Photograph by Alvin Langon Coburn, published in *Men of Mark*, 1913. Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-c4a7-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

Matisse's palette. Photo © 2016 Matthias Schaller/VG-Bildkunst

Richard Diebenkorn. *Ocean Park #27*. 1970. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 100 x 80 in. (254 x 203.2 cm). Brooklyn Museum, gift of the Roebling Society and Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Blatt and Mr. and Mrs. William K. Jacobs, Jr., 72.4. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

Richard Diebenkorn in his Hillcrest Road studio, 1959. Photo © Fred Lyon

Richard Diebenkorn. *Ocean Park #29*. 1970. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 100 1/8 x 81 1/8 in. (254.3 x 206.1 cm). Dallas Museum of Art, gift of the Meadows Foundation, Incorporated, 1981.106. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

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STILL LIFES

KEY TERMS
- Palette
- Pattern
- Perspective
- Still Life

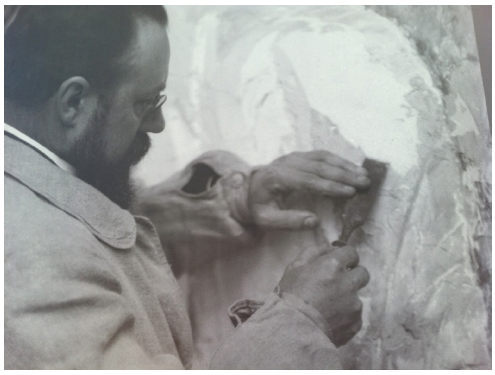
"I do not literally paint that table, but the emotion it produces upon me." [1]

HENRI MATISSE

HENRI MATISSE
INTERIOR, FLOWERS AND PARAKEETS 1924
Oil on canvas. 46 1/4 x 29 in. (117.5 x 73.7 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.252. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

CLOSE LOOKING

MATISSE PAINTED INTERIOR, FLOWERS AND PARAKEETS in his apartment in Nice, in the south of France, where he lived from 1921 to 1938. When painting interior scenes, Matisse generally included still lifes—artfully arranged objects such as fabrics, pots, and rugs chosen for their decorative appeal from the artist's own collections. In *Interior, Flowers and Parakeets*, Matisse grouped on a gold textile a pot of pink flowers, two lemons, a cup and saucer, and a metal birdcage holding a pair of lime-green parrots. Matisse had a passion for birds; later in life, he kept five or six of them at a time for artistic inspiration.[2]



Alvin Langdon Coburn. Henri Matisse working on sculpture "Nu de dos II" in studio at Issy-les Moulineaux, France May 1913. Negative, gelatin on nitrocellulose roll film (digital positive from original negative), 12 x 9 cm, George Eastman Museum, Gift of Alvin Langdon Coburn 1979.3924.0009 © The Universal Order

The painting's sightline runs through the apartment to the artist's studio in back, and then to the sky and buildings in the background. An elevated perspective ensures that all objects on the table are seen—yet the still life, presumably the painting's subject, is treated with the same open brushwork and level of detail as the objects around it. The table beneath it is rendered with some depth but remains consistent with the flattened vertical composition.

The palette is strong and vibrant, and the patterns are bold. Repeated pink-red floor tiles are interrupted by a carpet. Its rounded floral design is repeated on the table runner and, in the background, on the screen that shields a green daybed on which Matisse posed his models. Curving lines abound on the tablecloth, wallpaper, and elaborate fabric with Islamic decoration to the left of the drawn-back curtain. Matisse was inspired by the art and design of the Islamic world after visiting southern Spain and painting for a few months in Morocco in 1912 and 1913.

ART IN CONTEXT

HENRI MATISSE
LEMONS ON A PEWTER PLATE
1926 (reworked 1929). Oil on canvas. 21 5/8 x 26 1/8 in. (55 x 66.4 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago, a Millennium Gift of the Sara Lee Corporation, 1999.371. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

CHANGES IN LOCATION always had a significant impact on Matisse's and Diebenkorn's painting. Matisse began visiting the south of France in 1905 and moved there permanently in 1921. The darker palette of Matisse's Paris pictures, such as that of *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel* (see page 11) was replaced by vigorous pink-reds, yellows, greens, and blues inspired by the southern region's clear light, cloudless skies, and brilliant colors. Said Matisse, "If I had painted in the north…my painting would have been different. There would have been browns, grays, shades of color through perspective."[3] Though vibrant, the hues of the Nice canvases, such as those in *Interior, Flowers and Parakeets* (see page 27), were not taken directly from nature. Of his palette, Matisse said, "My choice of colors does not rest on any scientific theory; it is based on observation, on feeling, on the very nature of each experience. I… merely try to find a color that will fit my sensation."[4] Diebenkorn admired Matisse's expressive brushstrokes and use of color and pattern. The American artist said, "Matisse always surprises me, he's so rich…. He's as sumptuous a painter as there is. It's the restraint coupled with the sensuousness that's so utterly exceptional."[5]

Matisse's stylistic choices and technique later informed the palette, ornamentation, and gestural brushwork of Diebenkorn's still lifes.

MATISSE ALSO PAINTED his still life *Lemons on a Pewter Plate* in Nice. The fruit, plate, and table appear closer to the picture plane (the painting's surface) than the objects in *Interior, Flowers and Parakeets*, yet he painted all of them with a similar technique. The French artist built up the objects by layering dabs of colored paint.

Colorful fabric patterned with leaf-like forms and curving lines acts as the still life's backdrop. Matisse, an avid traveler, collected richly patterned textiles on trips to southern Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tahiti, and elsewhere. He may have bought the complex orange-and-white textile seen in *Lemons on a Pewter Plate in Nice* while on a trip abroad. The artist also purchased Parisian haute couture from the finest fashion houses at end-of-season sales and incorporated these fabrics in his paintings and works on paper.[6]

MATISSE'S LOVE OF TEXTILES and patterning may have inspired the blue-and-white tablecloth that Diebenkorn depicted in his painting *Still Life with Orange Peel*. The American artist took the striped fabric from his childhood bedspread.[7] Painted from a bird's-eye view, everything in the composition is equally visible—orange, peel, rotting lemon, bottled beverage, and filled glass. Rather than carefully arranging objects, Diebenkorn found an assortment of things on a table and began painting. He then edited the objects by moving or painting them out as his composition developed.

Large Still Life, painted 11 years after *Still Life with Orange Peel*, illustrates Diebenkorn's increased interest in abstraction that would later culminate in his *Ocean Park* series. He chose the objects in the still life—papers, ink bottle, and cup—from his studio and painted them with little detail. The orange-peach palette in the lower half of *Large Still Life* is reminiscent of the color Matisse used in *Lemons on a Pewter Plate*. But while it's clear that a table supports the still life in Matisse's painting, the peach-colored structure in Diebenkorn's composition is difficult to identify. And by not painting the structure's side edges, Diebenkorn created little sense of three-dimensional space. The result is a structure so abstracted that it is rendered as two adjoining rectangles lying almost flat against the blue background.

Diebenkorn's patterning in the upper half of the painting hearkens back to Matisse. Multicolored circular shapes and curving lines create a sense of movement that sharply contrasts with the block-like structure in the lower half of the composition. Throughout, evidence of layering, scraping away, and reapplying color is reminiscent of Matisse's visible process.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
STILL LIFE WITH ORANGE PEEL
1955
Oil on canvas. 29 1/4 x 24 1/2 in. (74.3 x 62.2 cm). San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, bequest of Barbara E. Foster, 2016. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
LARGE STILL LIFE
1966
Oil on canvas. 64 1/2 x 70 1/4 in. (163.8 x 178.4 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York: Gift of the Family of Richard Diebenkorn, 315.2004. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

[1] Henri Matisse interview with Clara T. MacChesney (1912), edit. Jack Flan, *Matisse on Art: Documents in Twentieth-Century Art* (University of California Press, 1995), 66.
[2] "Biography of Matisse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.henri-matisse.net/biography.html.
[3] "Lemons on a Pewter Plate," Art Institute of Chicago, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/153703/print.
[4] Henri Matisse, "Notes d'un Peintre," *La Grande Revue Paris* (December 25 ,1908), 412, trans. Jack Flam, *Matisse on Art: Documents in Twentieth-century Art* (University of California Press, 1995), 41.
[5] Dan Hofstadter, "Profiles: Almost Free of the Mirror," *The New Yorker*, September 7, 1987, 69.
[6] "Biography of Matisse," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.henri-matisse.net/biography.html.
[7] Ruth E. Fine, "Reality: Digested, Transmuted, and Twisted," in *The Art of Richard Diebenkorn*, ed. Jane Livingston (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with University of California Press, 1997), 105, n14.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

CREATING A STILL LIFE

Grades: 3–5
Subjects: English Language Arts, Visual Arts

Artists have used still lifes to sharpen their technical skills, capture a moment in time, comment on the fragile nature of life, and create decorative compositions. In this lesson, students will create a still life using a bird's-eye perspective, similar to that seen in the works of Richard Diebenkorn.

Students will look closely at *Interior, Flowers and Parakeets* by Matisse and *Still Life with Orange Peel* by Diebenkorn. During a group discussion, the teacher will record student responses to the following questions on a Venn diagram on the white/blackboard.

- What colors do you see?
- What shapes do you see?
- What textures do you see?
- What patterns do you see?
- What do you think each painting is showing us?
- What is the perspective of each painting? Where does the artist seem to be in relation to his subjects?
- What is different about these two paintings?

The teacher will share basic information on still lifes—for instance, that artists use them to perfect their craft, to show moments in time, to communicate that life is fleeting, and/or to create a decorative composition.

Students then will be asked to look again at the two paintings and share any additional thoughts now that they know how still lifes are used.

Using a simple arrangement of four or five everyday objects of his or her choosing, each student will look closely at the arrangement from a frontal and a bird's-eye perspective. The teacher will ask students to discuss the two perspectives' differences, including what they can and cannot see from each vantage point.

Students then will create an arrangement using four to five objects on their desk or table. Using a piece of paper and chalk or oil pastels, they will depict their still life arrangement from a bird's-eye view, similar to that of *Still Life with Orange Peel*. They will be asked to share their works with the class, identifying ideas associated with still lifes that apply to their compositions.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Grade 3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1.
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL5.1.
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

MARYLAND STATE CURRICULUM

Visual Arts

Grade 3

1.1.a. Describe similarities and differences between the elements of art in observed forms.
1.1.b. Represent relationships among, people, animals, and objects in visual compositions using selected elements of art in various combinations.
1.2.a. Compare and describe how artists communicate what they see, know, feel, and imagine using art vocabulary.
3.2.b. Identify and describe color, line, shape, texture, form, space, and selected principles of design such as pattern, repetition, contrast, and balance in artworks that convey what they see, know, and feel.

Grade 4

1.1.a. Analyze ways that the elements of art, such as color, line, and shape are used to represent visual and tactile texture and movement in artworks.
1.1.b. Represent relationships among observed people, animals, and objects in a composition by selecting and using the elements of art to achieve specific effects.
1.2.a. Compare ways that artists use and communicate mood and point of view using art vocabulary.
3.2.b. Identify and describe color, line, shape, texture, form, space, and selected principles of design, such as pattern, repetition, contrast, balance, and variety in artworks that convey what they see, know and feel.

Grade 5

1.1.a. Analyze how physical qualities of people, animals, and objects are represented through elements of art.
1.1.b. Compose and render from observation subject matter that shows 3-dimensional form, light and shadow, qualities of surface texture, detail, and spatial relationships.
1.2.a. Analyze and compare how artists express thematic ideas using art vocabulary.
3.2.b. Identify and describe the elements of art and selected principles of design, such as pattern, repetition, contrast, balance, variety, and unity in artworks.

Henri Matisse. *Interior, Flowers and Parakeets*. 1924. Oil on canvas. 46 1/4 x 29 in. (117.5 x 73.7 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.252. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

Alvin Langdon Coburn. Henri Matisse working on sculpture “Nu de dos II” in studio at Issy-les Moulineaux, France May 1913. Negative, gelatin on nitrocellulose roll film (digital positive from original negative), 12 x 9 cm, George Eastman Museum, Gift of Alvin Langdon Coburn 1979.3924.0009 © The Universal Order

STILL LIFES

Henri Matisse. *Lemons on a Pewter Plate*. 1926 (reworked 1929). Oil on canvas. 21 5/8 x 26 1/8 in. (55 x 66.4 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago, a Millennium Gift of the Sara Lee Corporation, 1999.371. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

Richard Diebenkorn. *Still Life with Orange Peel*. 1955. Oil on canvas. 29 1/4 x 24 1/2 in. (74.3 x 62.2 cm). San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, bequest of Barbara E. Foster, 2016. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Richard Diebenkorn. *Large Still Life*. 1966. Oil on canvas. 64 ½ x 70 ¼ in. (163.8 x 178.4 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York: Gift of the Family of Richard Diebenkorn, 315.2004. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART BMA

FIGURES

KEY TERMS
- Composition
- Figure/Figural/Figurative
- Proportion
- Representational

CLOSE LOOKING

HENRI MATISSE PAINTED *The Yellow Dress* in Nice, France, and reworked it over an extended period, from 1929 to 1931. A large female figure commands the center of the composition, sitting with hands folded in a room full of pattern and bright color. Because the model does not cast shadows, she lacks a sense of volume: she appears to be a somewhat flat entity of layered greens, yellows, blues, and pinks. The figure is treated similarly to the patterned architectural elements around her. Repeated hexagons create a tiled floor, and rhythmic curving and vertical lines decorate the walls. Straight lines are echoed in the slats of the wooden shutters and windowpanes. Overall, bold ornamentation and brilliant hues create a vibrant composition.

HENRI MATISSE
THE GIRL IN YELLOW DRESS (JEUNE FILLE EN ROBE JAUNE),
1929–31
Oil on canvas. 39 5/8 x 32 1/8 in. (100.7 x 81.6 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.256. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New Yorkk

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
SEATED FIGURE WITH HAT
1967
Oil on canvas. 57 3/4 x 61 3/4 in. (146.7 x 156.8 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., gift of the Collectors Committee and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Rubin, 1991.176.1. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

"The entire arrangement of my picture is expressive; the place occupied by my figures, the empty space around them, the proportions, everything has its share. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter's command to express his feelings."[1]

HENRI MATISSE

Pentimenti, evidence of repainting that is visible under layers of color, indicate that the model's face and form were reworked multiple times. Close looking reveals that Matisse changed the figure's arm size and position, made her posture more erect, painted over patterns on her dress, and enlarged her skirt. It was as though Matisse was "thinking aloud, paintbrush in hand" as he made multiple revisions.[2]

Many of the women who posed for Matisse had personal relationships with him and his family and are known by name. For example, the figure in *The Yellow Dress* (see page 37), a young woman named Lisette Lowengard, modeled for Matisse from 1928 to 1933. She later became a nursemaid to his wife and a studio assistant. Perhaps in part because of his relationships with his models—and because they sat for him while he worked—Matisse often painted them with identifiable faces.

In contrast, Richard Diebenkorn's treatment often is more generalized. He did not frequently paint with models in front of him; this was a deliberate choice. His figures are less about specific identity and more about creating an ambiguity that draws in the viewer.

ART IN CONTEXT

Certain features of *The Yellow Dress* are hallmarks of Matisse's painting in the 1920s and 1930s. These elements, many of which are also visible in his Nice painting *Interior, Flowers and Parakeets* (see page 27), include bright color, bold ornamentation, views through a room to scenery beyond, and, often, shuttered windows. However, the predominance of the figure sitting upright in the center of *The Yellow Dress* indicates a radical departure for Matisse. In earlier paintings, his models were generally smaller in scale, less commanding, and often treated as just another decorative element in the composition.

Diebenkorn, too, had significant shifts in his painting style throughout his career. In 1955, after years of success as an abstract painter, he began painting representational works. This was a risky and controversial change—in the United States at that time, abstract painting was considered a superior form of artistic expression. For more than a decade, until his style shifted back to abstraction, Diebenkorn took as his subjects interiors, landscapes, still lifes from his home and studio, and human figures. He regularly drew live models at night in Berkeley, California, with a group of artist friends, who collectively came to be known as the Bay Area Figurative Painters. Diebenkorn's figure studies form one of the largest bodies of his work.

IN 1966, DIEBENKORN SAW in Los Angeles a major Matisse retrospective that included 346 drawings, prints, paper cutouts, sculptures, and paintings, including *The Yellow Dress*. Soon after, Diebenkorn painted *Seated Figure with Hat* (see page 37), a monumental rendering of his wife, Phyllis, in profile. Perhaps the artist was influenced by Matisse's palette, brushwork, and scale of the figure in *The Yellow Dress*. However, it is evident in *Seated Figure with Hat* that Diebenkorn was not influenced by the French artist's love of decoration. Whereas Matisse used the dress to add more pattern to the composition, Diebenkorn simplified Phyllis's shirt and skirt almost to the point of being planes of color. Over time, Diebenkorn enlarged Phyllis's figure and made changes to the background, scraping down layers of pigment and repainting areas of the canvas with broad brushwork. Diebenkorn made little attempt to imitate three-dimensional volume, and, as a result, the figure appears to be flat against the surface of the painting.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
GIRL WITH FLOWERED BACKGROUND
1962
Oil on canvas. 40 x 34 in. (101.6 x 86.4 cm). Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, museum purchase, Sid W. Richardson Foundation Endowment Fund, 1991.11. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Diebenkorn would later acknowledge his move toward collapsing space in the 1960s. "Things really started to flatten out in the representational," he recalled during interviews in the 1980s. "Five years earlier, I was dealing with much more traditional depth, space."[3] Diebenkorn viewed this evolution of his work as an unconscious shift back to abstract painting, a change that occurred gradually in the mid- to late 1960s and culminated in the *Ocean Park* series (see pages 13 and 14).

IN HIS FIGURATIVE WORKS, Diebenkorn generally painted women alone, either standing or sitting, and usually lost in thought. The vast majority of their faces are obscured, cut off, or shown only from the back of the head. In *Seated Figure with Hat*, Phyllis's face is all but completely covered by the brim. The same is true of the figure in *Girl with Flowered Background*, whose face is hidden behind her hand; Diebenkorn often chose to generalize or conceal faces so that the focus is not on the identity of the sitter but on the figure's relationship to the whole composition.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
UNTITLED (SEATED WOMAN, PATTERNED DRESS)
1966
Gouache, crayon, and ink on paper. 30 ¼ x 24 ¼ in. (76.8 x 61.6 cm). University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York, purchase of Student Art Council, 1970. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

In *Girl with Patterned Background*, similarities to Matisse's painting structure are seen in the impressive size of the figure, her central position in the canvas, the bright pigments, and the decorative patterning that, though limited, is around her. The swirling background of flowerlike forms surrounded by curving lines and brushwork generates a sense of motion. Diebenkorn repeated this whorl pattern four years later in his painting *Large Still Life* (see page 29).

[1] Henri Matisse, "Notes d'un Peintre," *La Grande Revue Paris* (December 25, 1908), 412, trans. Jack Flam, *Matisse on Art: Documents in Twentieth-century Art* (University of California Press, 1995), 38.
[2] Susan Benford, "Matisse Paintings: The Yellow Dress," accessed May 4, 2016, http://www.themasterpiececards.com/famous-paintings-reviewed/bid/92913/Matisse-Paintings-The-Yellow-Dress.
[3] Oral history interview with Richard Diebenkorn, May 1, 1985–December 15, 1987, *Archives of American Art,* Smithsonian Institution.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

STUDIES IN COLOR

Grades: 6–8
Subjects: English Language Arts, Visual Arts

Color is a critically important part of Henri Matisse and Richard Diebenkorn's work. Both artists' use of color allowed them to create bold and visually striking compositions. In this lesson, students will closely examine the use of color in Matisse's and Diebenkorn's works and create their own compositions with a palette inspired by one of the featured paintings.

Students will be asked to compare and contrast *The Yellow Dress* by Matisse and *Seated Figure with Hat* by Diebenkorn. The teacher will record student responses in a Venn diagram on the white/blackboard.

- What art elements—color, line, shape, texture, and form—do you see in the paintings?
- What figures and objects do you recognize?
- How would you describe the moods of the paintings? What do you see that supports your ideas? How do you think mood and color are related?
- What are the relationships among the colors in the two paintings?

In response to student observations, the teacher will share contextual information about the paintings, pointing out that Diebenkorn frequently was inspired by Matisse's color palette.

The teacher will then show students Diebenkorn's *Girl with Flowered Background*. With oil pastels and paper or acrylic paint and canvas, students will each create a figural composition (a composition featuring a person) using a color palette inspired by *Girl with Flowered Background* or *Seated Figure with Hat*.

When students have completed their projects, the teacher will lead a follow-up discussion and have them share their pastels and paintings. The following questions can be used to guide the conversation:

- Which Diebenkorn painting did you select? Why?
- How did you use the colors from the painting?
- Did using that palette make your own painting easier or harder than you expected?
- What was the hardest element to depict with this palette? How did you resolve any compositional problems that you encountered?

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Grade 6
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1.
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Grade 7
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1.
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Grade 8
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

MARYLAND STATE CURRICULUM

Visual Arts

Grade 6
1.3.a. Identify and describe how artists use design concepts to organize the elements of art and principles of design to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
3.1.c. Create visual images or forms from observation, memory, and imagination to convey ideas and personal meaning with attention to 2- and 3-dimensional form, proportion, qualities of surface texture, detail, and spatial relationships.

Grade 7
1.3.a. Compare and describe how artists use design concepts to organize the elements of art and principles of design to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings in selected artworks.
3.1.c. Create visual images or forms from observation, memory, and imagination to communicate ideas and personal meaning with attention to form, light and shadow, qualities of surface texture, detail, and spatial relationships.

Grade 8
1.3.a. Analyze why artists may select specific design concepts to convey meaning in artistic exemplars.
3.1.c. Create visual images or forms from observation, memory, and imagination to convey ideas and personal meaning with attention to point of view, detail, and spatial relationships.

Henri Matisse. *The Yellow Dress*. 1929–31. Oil on canvas. 39 5/8 x 32 1/8 in. (100.7 x 81.6 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.256. ©2016 Succession H. Matisse / ARS, New York

FIGURES

Richard Diebenkorn. *Seated Figure with Hat.* 1967. Oil on canvas. 57 3/4 x 61 3/4 in. (146.7 x 156.8 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., gift of the Collectors Committee and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Rubin, 1991.176.1. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Richard Diebenkorn. *Girl with Flowered Background*. 1962. Oil on canvas. 40 x 34 in. (101.6 x 86.4 cm). Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, museum purchase, Sid W. Richardson Foundation Endowment Fund, 1991.11. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

FIGURES

Richard Diebenkorn. *Untitled (Seated Woman, Patterned Dress)*. 1966. Gouache, crayon, and ink on paper. 30 ¼ x 24 ¼ in. (76.8 x 61.6 cm). University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York, purchase of Student Art Council, 1970. ©2016 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation