

Abstract Landscapes

Inspired By: April Werle

Grades: K-6

Estimated Time: 60+ minutes or
2 classes

Materials

Canvas, canvas paper, wood, or cardboard (the bigger the better), tempera or acrylic paint, painter's tape, paint brushes, found objects for patten and texture (bubble wrap, potato masher, sponges, marker caps, forks, etc..)

Key Terms

- **Symbol:** A mark or sign that represents or stands for something else, like an idea, object, person, or relationships
- **Texture:** How something feels or looks like it would feel
- **Pattern:** The repetition of lines, shapes, and or colors
- **Geometric:** Relating to math or design, using lines and shapes
- **Racial Equality:** Providing equal opportunities to people of all races, regardless of their skin color

Intro

Artist April Werle lives in Missoula and is known for her painted murals around town, though she makes other paintings too. In her artwork she often uses hands and other symbols to represent people interacting with different landscapes or environments. The interesting thing about April's paintings is that her landscapes don't look like typical landscapes, and her people are represented by just a hand. April uses geometric shapes of color and different textures to create these made up landscapes. She explains, "When I was younger, I was only drawing hands. Hands are so universal; you can't tell by looking at the hands if they're male or female. They're painted black and white so there's no race associated, they're just a universal symbol for being human."

This lesson lets us experiment making landscapes using symbols, colors, patterns, and textures. Instead of painting people, we will paint our hands, and we will create places for them that are inspired by racial equality. All are welcome in these places, regardless of their skin color. What does this place look like? How can we create this place using simple shapes, colors, and patterns?

Process

Step 1: On your paper or canvas put down 3 or 4 pieces of painter's tape. The tape should connect from one side of the paper to the other or from one piece of tape to the edge of the paper. You can put your lines of tape in any direction.

Step 2: Choose a variety of colors to paint your background. Paint each shape that you created with the painter's tape a different color. April Werle shared that she uses colors that often match the seasons. In winter she uses blues and lighter colors, in the summer, she uses brighter colors. **Step 3:** Once the paint feels dry you can choose a few textures to add to your shapes to create different patterns. You can also paint symbols over the shapes you have made. Maybe you want to add a triangle mountain or a moon or arrow like April uses.

Step 4: Carefully peel off the tape and see your geometric design!

Step 5: The last step is adding your person to your story. This is the messy step. You may need someone to help you. Paint the inside of your hand any color besides skin colors, this way your person will be a universal symbol for humans, regardless of their skin color. While the paint is still wet on your hand, press it onto your paper or canvas. You want to make sure you get all the parts of your hand printed on the paper; fingertips included. If a few spots don't show up, you can use your fingers to fill them in. You can also trace your hand and paint the outline so that it stands out more. Don't forget to wash your hand.

Reflection

- Display your artwork. If you're in a classroom, it would look really cool to display all your artwork together in the halls of your school.
- If you are at home, you can display your artwork in your window so if people pass by or visit, they can see it!
- Share your work on AMM's Community Gallery

Standards

- **Anchor Standard #1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
- **Anchor Standard #3:** Refine and complete artistic work
- **Anchor Standard #5:** Develop and refine artistic work for presentation
- **Anchor Standard #7:** Perceive and analyze artistic work
- **Anchor Standard #8:** Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work
- **Anchor Standard #11:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding, including artistic ideas and works by American Indians