

hirshhorn

Artist at Work with Youth with Baltimore-based artist Zoe Charlton

Strange Bodies

Chuck Close

Nick Cave

Yinka Shonibare

Lesson Packet

Fall 2009

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Smithsonian
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Strange Bodies: Figurative Works from the Hirshhorn Collection

One of the Hirshhorn's most important strengths is the depth of its holdings in figurative art. *Strange Bodies*, on view on the lower level of the Hirshhorn until November 15, brings together some of the most popular examples from the collection to examine how and why artists depict and distort the body. The overall grouping of sculptures, paintings, drawings, and film that comprises *Strange Bodies* spans the last hundred years, but the works reveal a common impulse toward depicting the human body, whether it is in a realistic, expressionistic, or surrealistic fashion. The loaded, at times dark, content figurative art can carry is explored, as is the fundamental human connection that occurs when one encounters an image of a fellow individual.

Among the objects on view are early and mid-twentieth century works by Francis Bacon, Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti, and Willem de Kooning, all part of the core collection donated to the Museum by its founder, Joseph H. Hirshhorn. Each of these artists has their own ways of manipulating the human figure to heighten its expressive and emotional impact. Joseph Hirshhorn also collected paintings by Balthus and René Magritte, who chose to represent the human subject in a surreal way, locating the body (or its parts) in contexts that are outside of mundane occurrences, and, in part, reflect the traumatic war-torn world in which their art developed.

James Rosenquist's *The Light That Won't Fail I*, 1961, is a painting that presents fragments of the body in a way that is at once Pop and ethereal. Georg Baselitz's *Meissen Woodsmen* from the same decade demonstrates a different approach to painting, fracturing figures to the point that they begin to disintegrate into abstractions.

The installation also includes newer acquisitions by artists who are continuing to participate in and challenge the tradition of figuration. Among these twenty-first century works is Ron Mueck's *Untitled (Big Man)*, 2000, always a favorite of Hirshhorn visitors. From painter John Currin to video artists Nicholas and Sheila Pye, each artist on view explores the complexity of individual identity through his or her own unique lens.

The following lesson plans focus on three of the more recent works on view in *Strange Bodies*: Chuck Close's *Roy II*, 1994; Nick Cave's *Soundsuit*, 2009; and Yinka Shonibare's *The Age of Enlightenment- Antoine Lavoisier*, 2008. Students will experiment with Close's innovative grid method to make colorful self portraits, create mixed-media sculptures inspired by Cave's *Soundsuit*, and, like Shonibare, explore ways to represent their personal and cultural identities.

Lesson Plan: Chuck Close

Date: September 26, 2009

Grade Level: 1–3; 5–7

Subject: Subjective and Abstracted Portraits

Theme: Have you ever been in a situation in which you wanted to do something, but couldn't? Or didn't know how? What did you do to solve the problem? Did you change the way you worked or played? Did you ask for help?

Well, in 1988, Chuck Close was giving a speech to present an award to an artist. He wasn't feeling well, but decided to finish his presentation. When he finished, he rushed to the hospital and within a few hours Close was paralyzed from his neck to his feet. After months of rehabilitation to strengthen his muscles, he was able to move his arms and legs a little, but he primarily uses a wheelchair. His disability has required him to find creative ways to make his paintings. When he paints, he straps his paintbrush to his wrist.

Before, Close used a technique called Photorealism (making a painting from a photograph), but now he had to find new strategies, or ways, to create his portraits. Can you tell me how he makes his paintings? What types of shapes do you see? How would you describe the colors? (Please discuss primary and secondary colors.)

Our project today will be influenced by methods Chuck Close uses to make his paintings. He uses a grid, simple shapes, and bright colors to create portraits.

Description: This lesson introduces young artists to the work and practice of Chuck Close, a photographer/painter who utilizes a grid to create large paintings based on photographs of friends and family.

Goals/Objectives:

To use a grid to enlarge a photograph

To use simple shapes to abstract a complex image

Materials: 7.5" x 11" printout of a portrait on an 8.5" x 11" paper in color
15" x 20" drawing paper
black marker
scissors
ruler
box of oil pastels



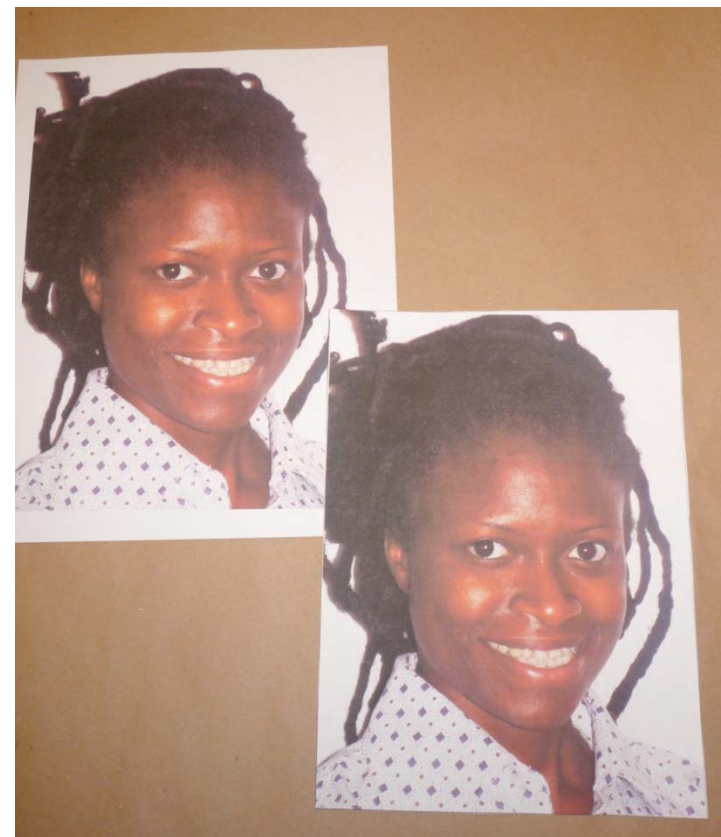
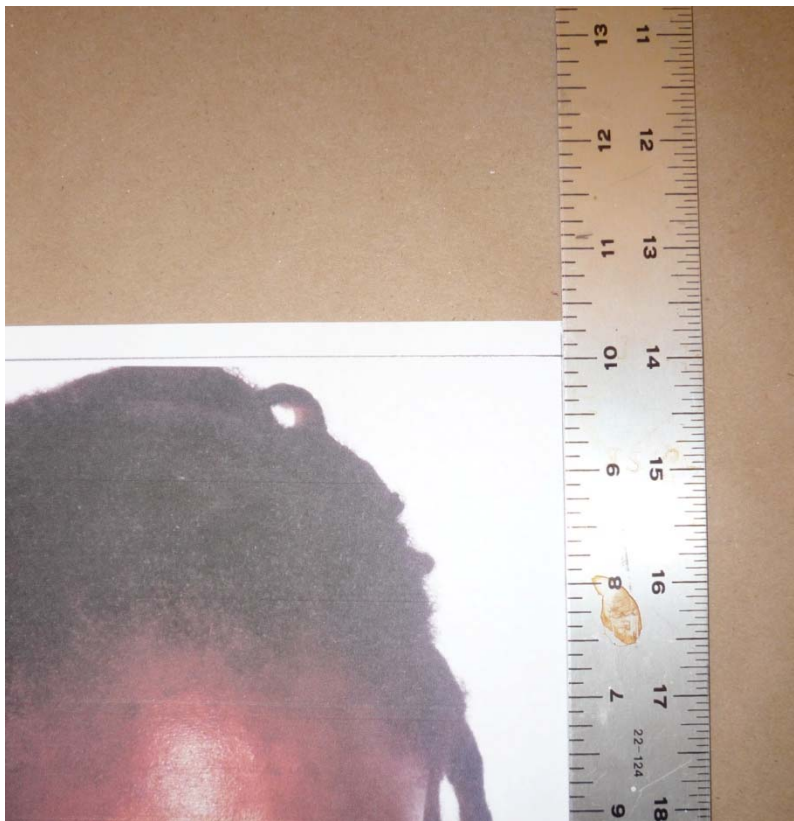
Duration: 1 to 2 hours

Methodology:
Part I

1. Take a photo of yourself (or of your student) that includes the head and neck (Portrait).

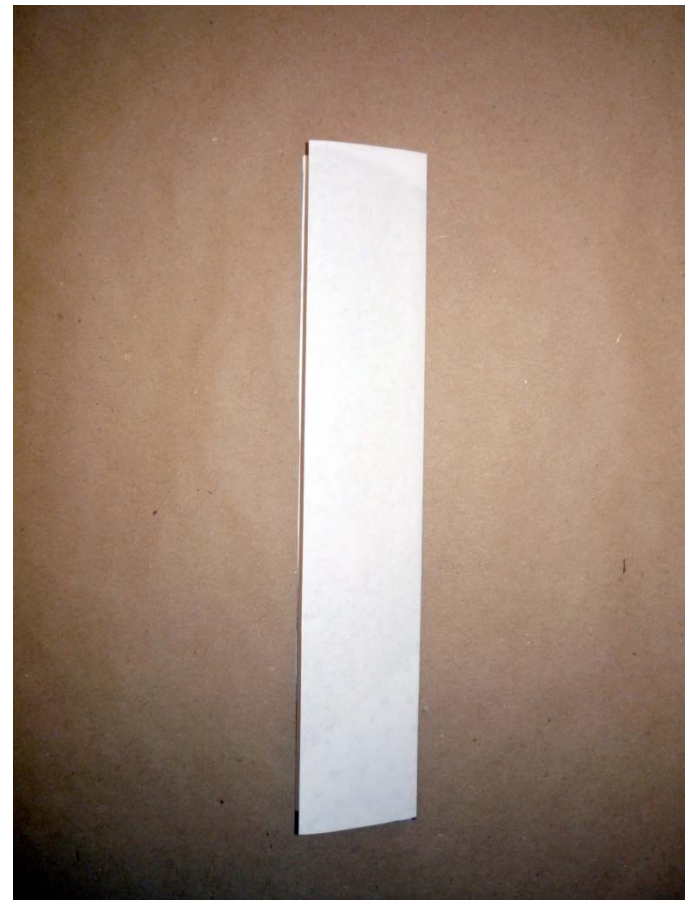
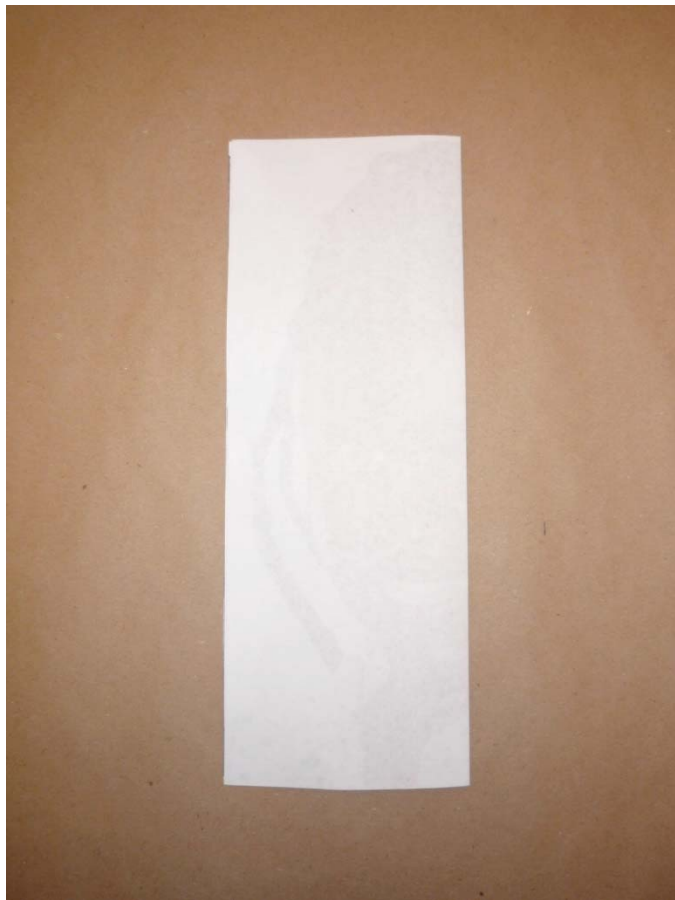


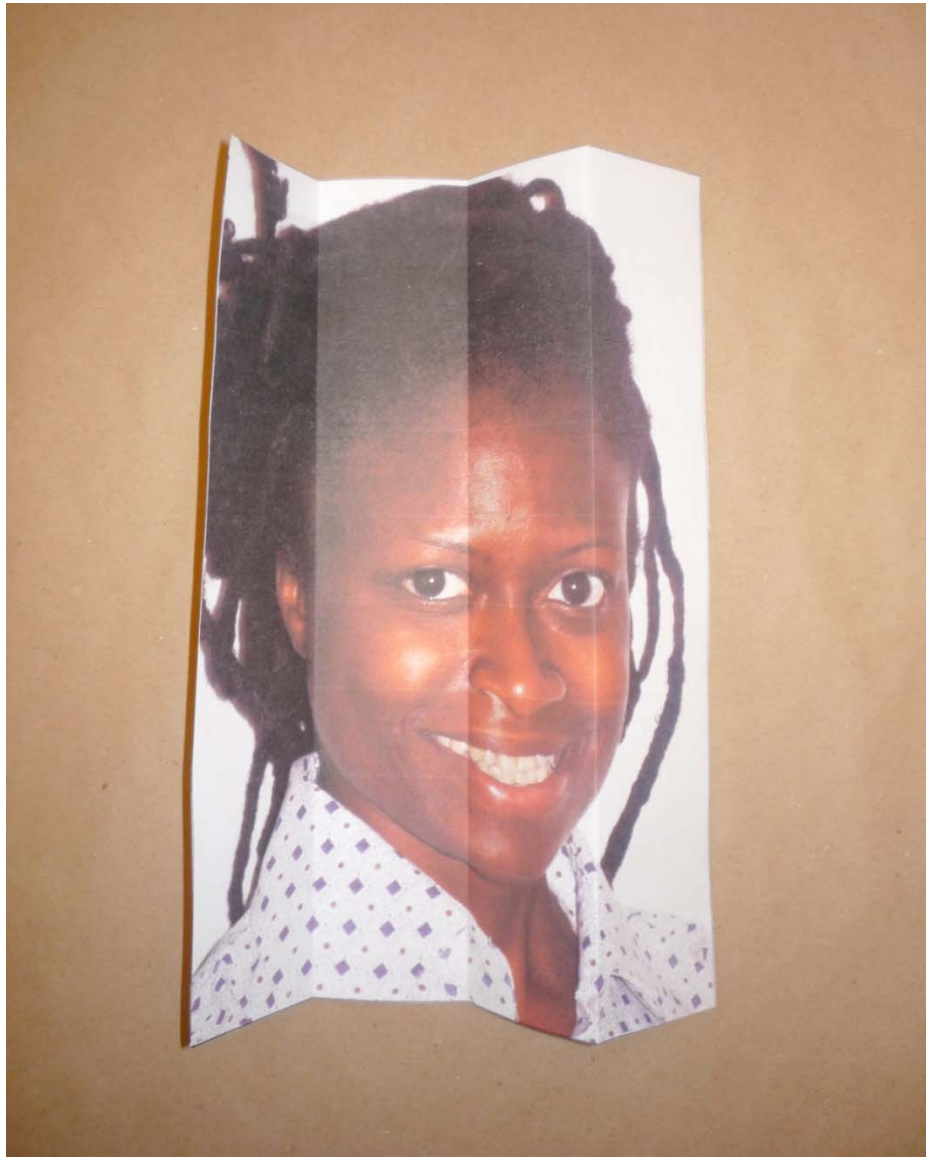
2. Since many printers do not print to the edge of the paper, you may need to resize your portrait using Photoshop (or other suitable imaging software). Make your portrait 7.5" x 10". Print it in **color** on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Please print two copies.
3. After printing them, cut the excess paper off the sides, top, and bottom so that the page measures 7.5" x 10". You may want to use your marker and ruler to measure this.



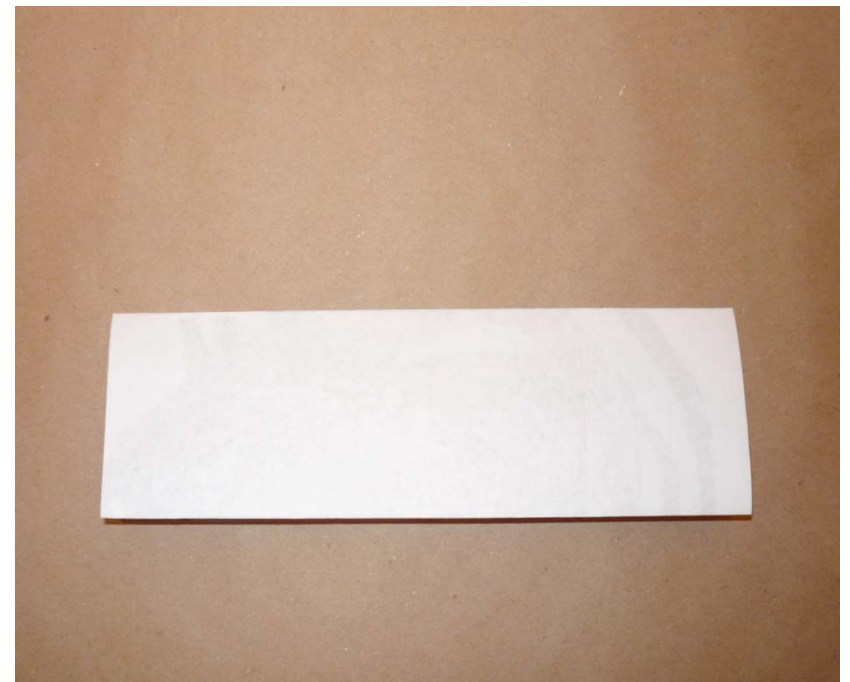
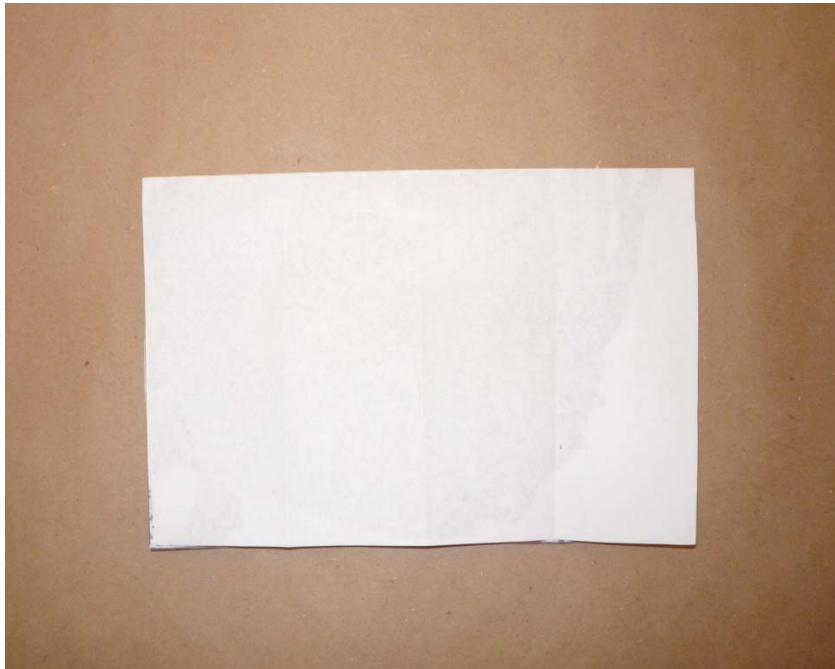
Part II

1. Fold your portrait in half vertically, then fold in half again in the same direction. Open it up.

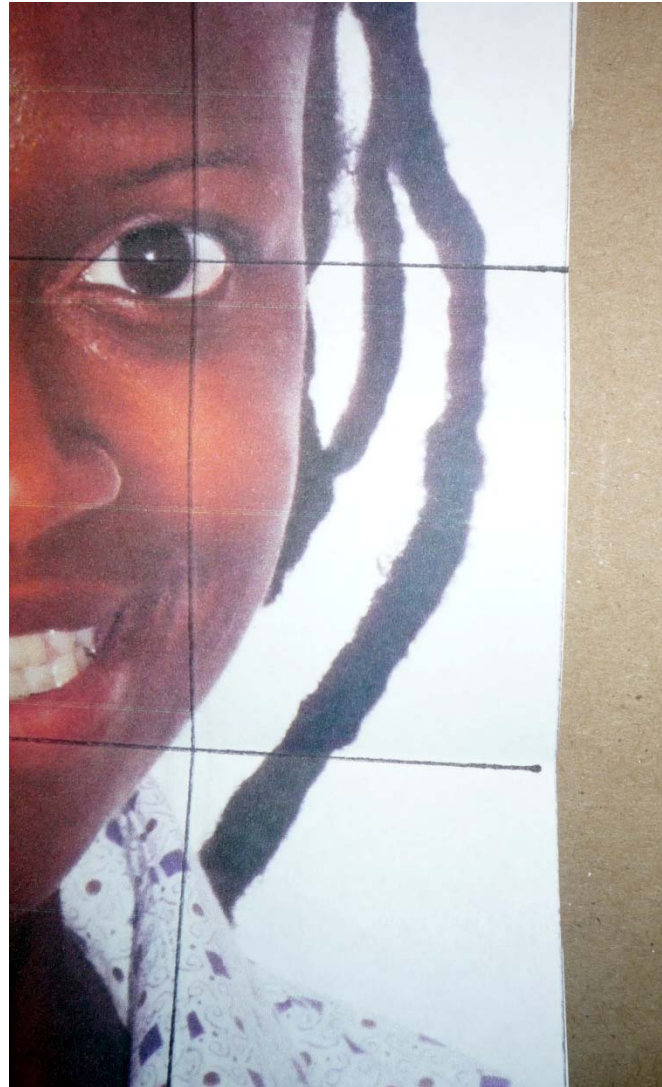




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2. Fold it in half horizontally, then fold it again in the same direction. Open it up. You now have four rows across and down on your portrait.



3. If needed, use your marker and ruler to draw lines on the folds so that you can see the rectangles more clearly.



Part III

1. On your 22" x 15" drawing paper, you will need to translate the folds on your portrait into measurements.
2. To grid your paper, find the horizontal and vertical centers.



3. Find the centers of each subsequent half.



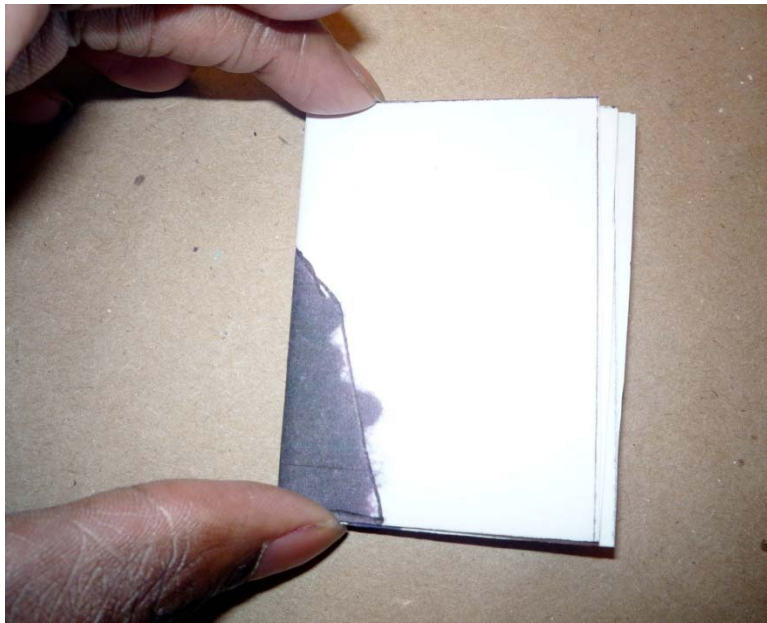
4. You will have four rows across and four rows down on your drawing paper.

Part IV

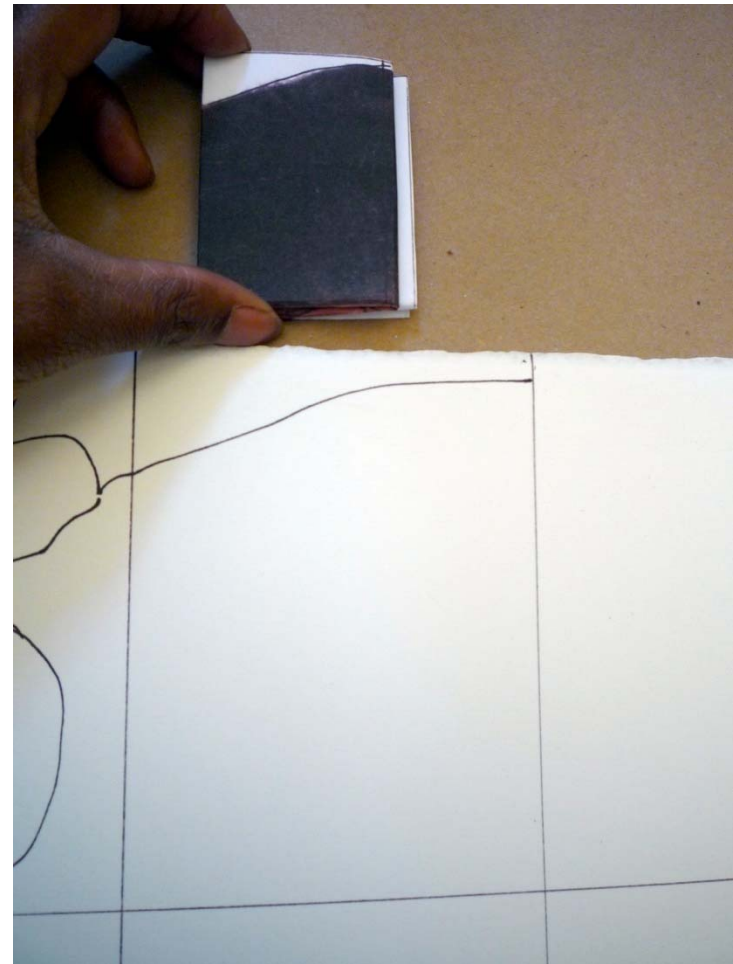
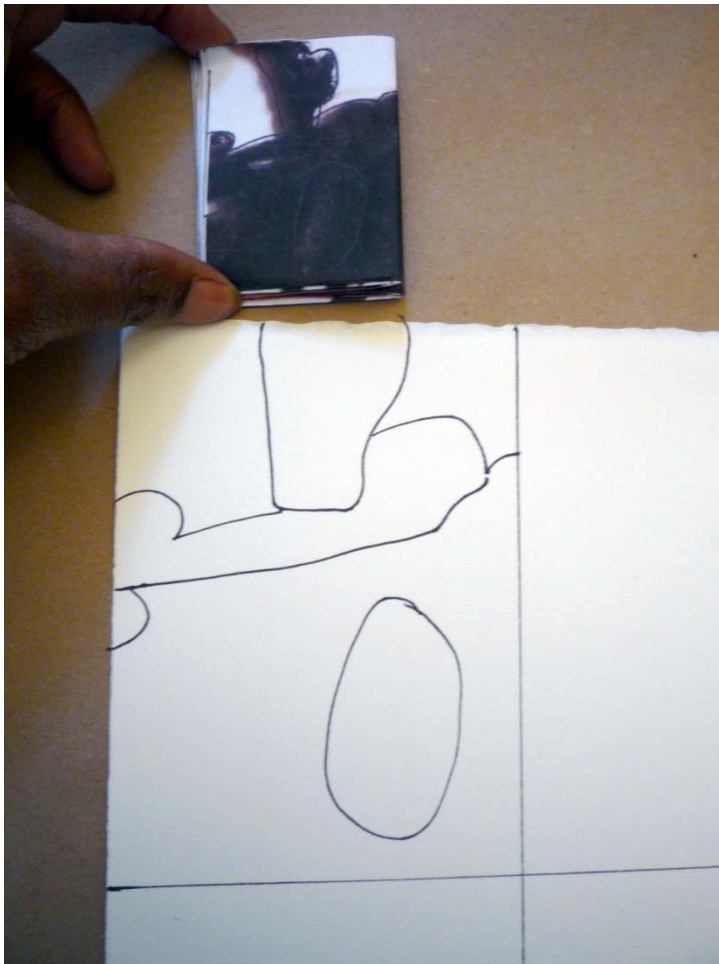
1. Using simple shapes, including triangles, rectangles, and circles, simplify your portrait.

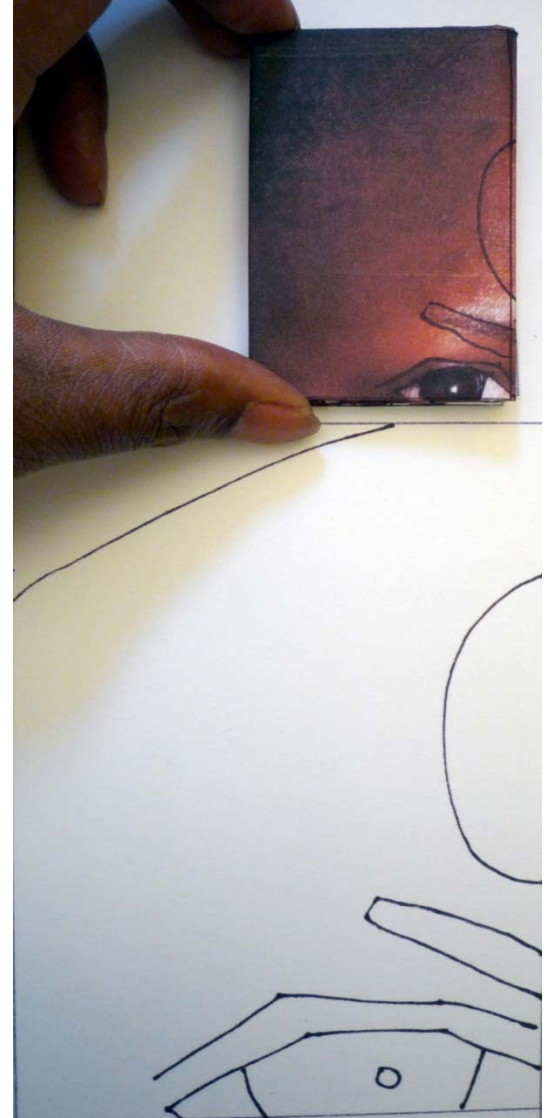
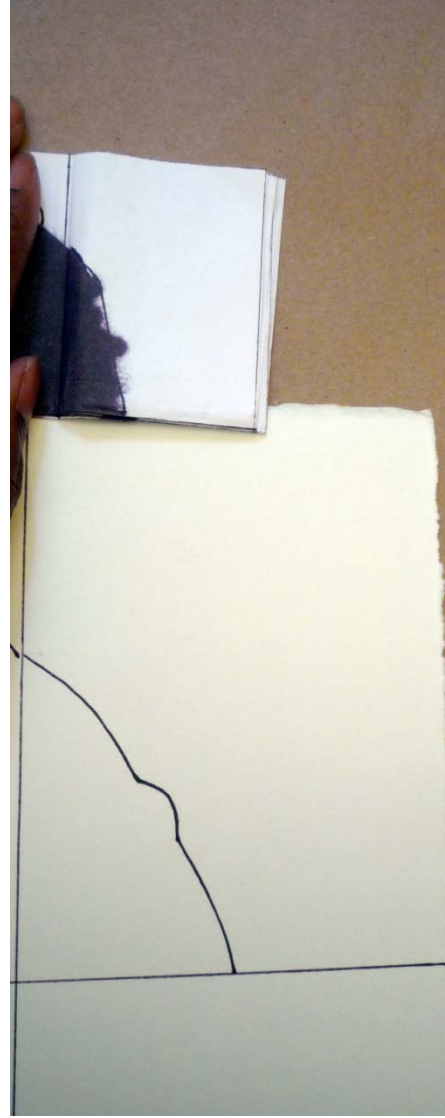
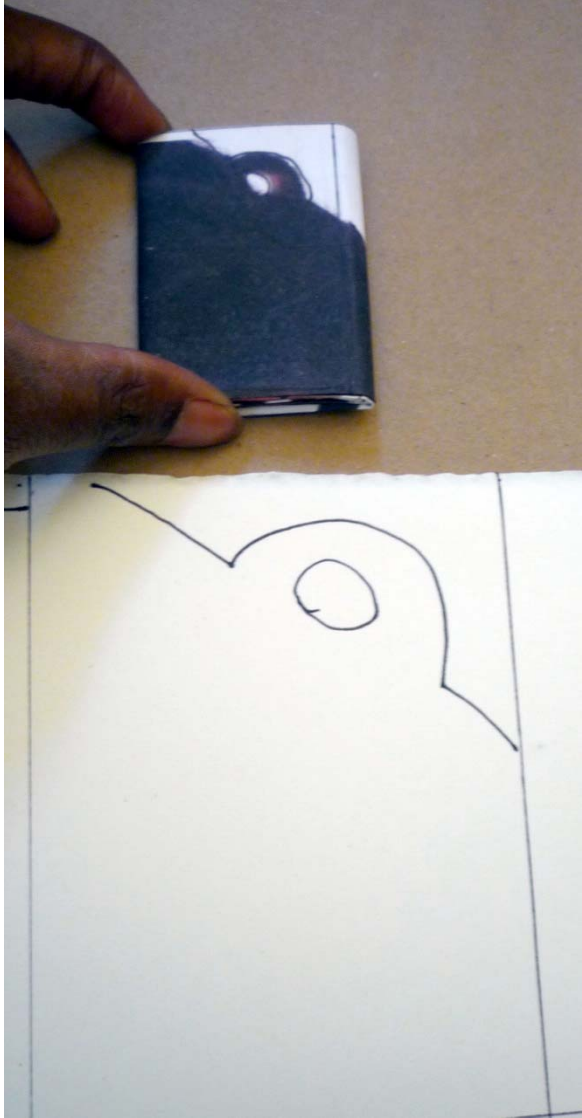


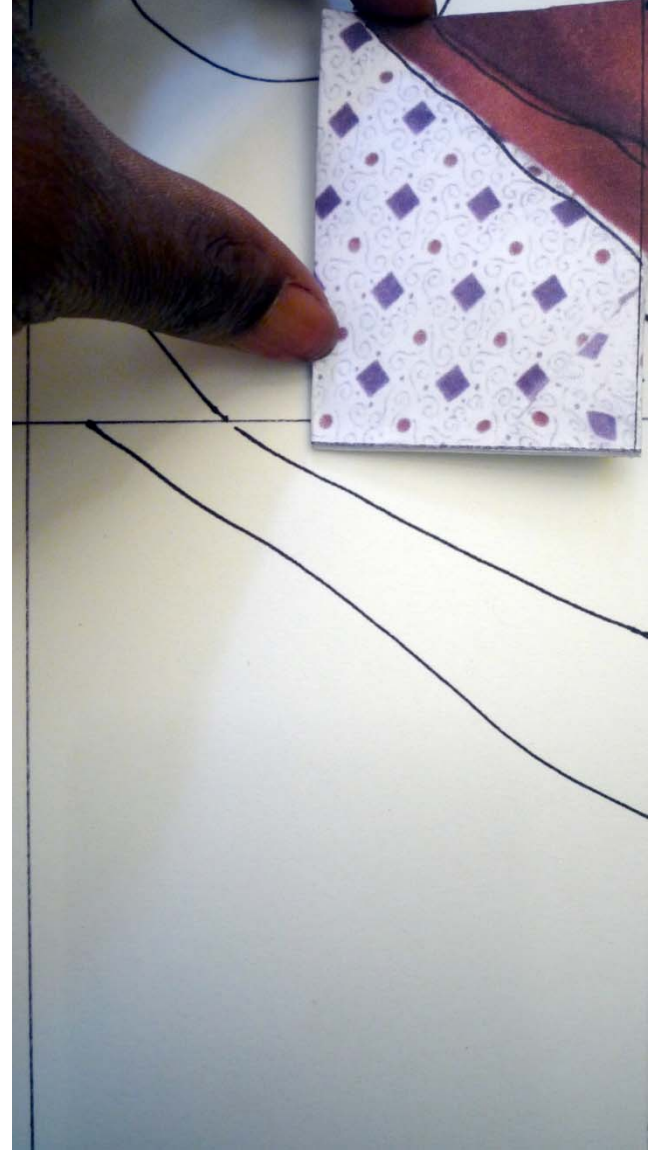
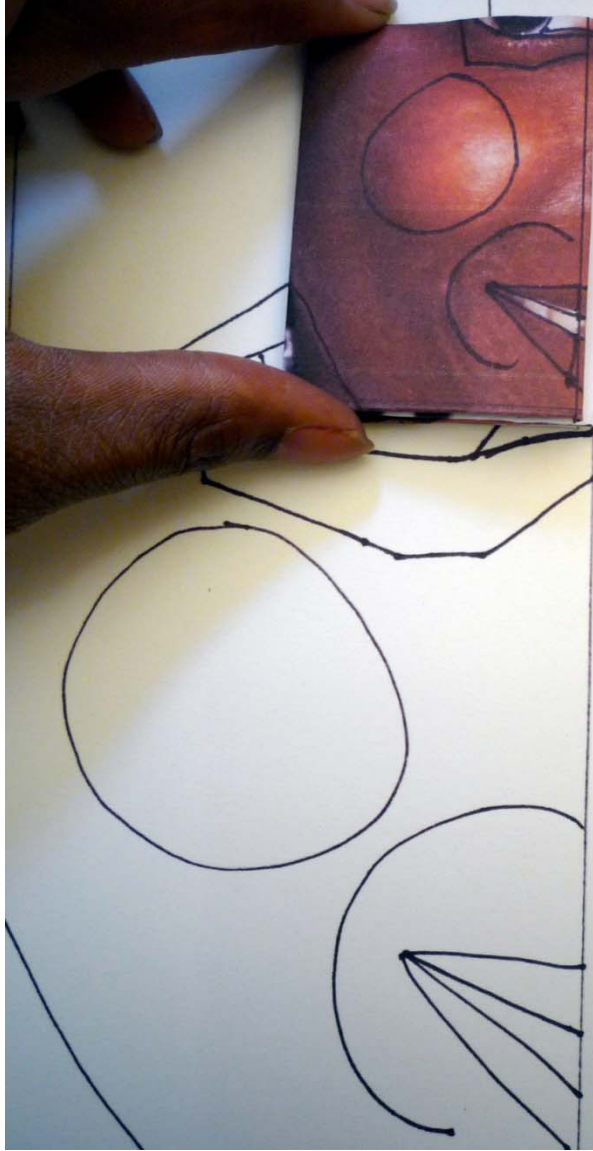
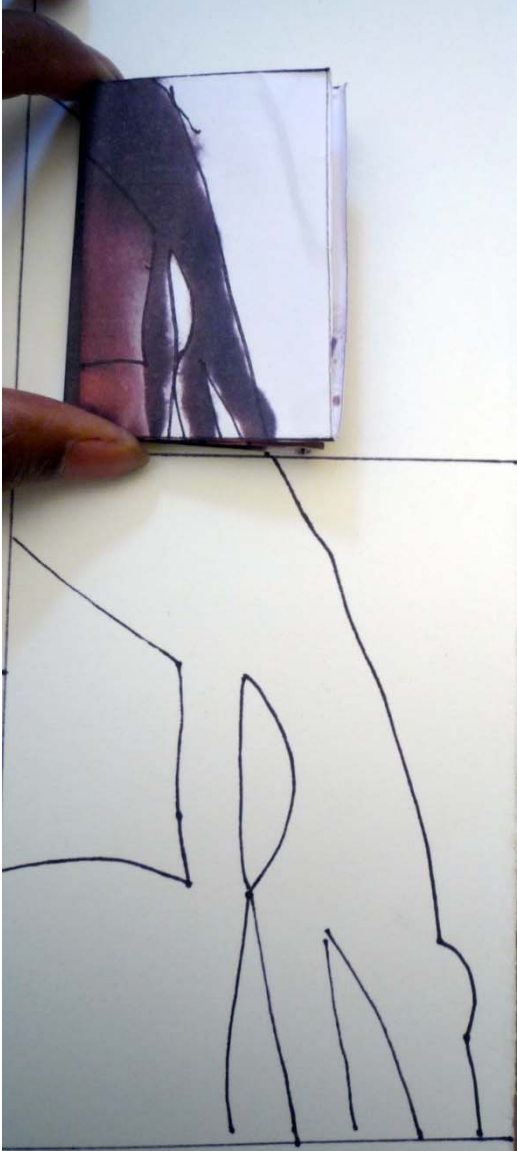
2. So that you work on **one** section at a time, fold your portrait so that you see **one** rectangle at a time.

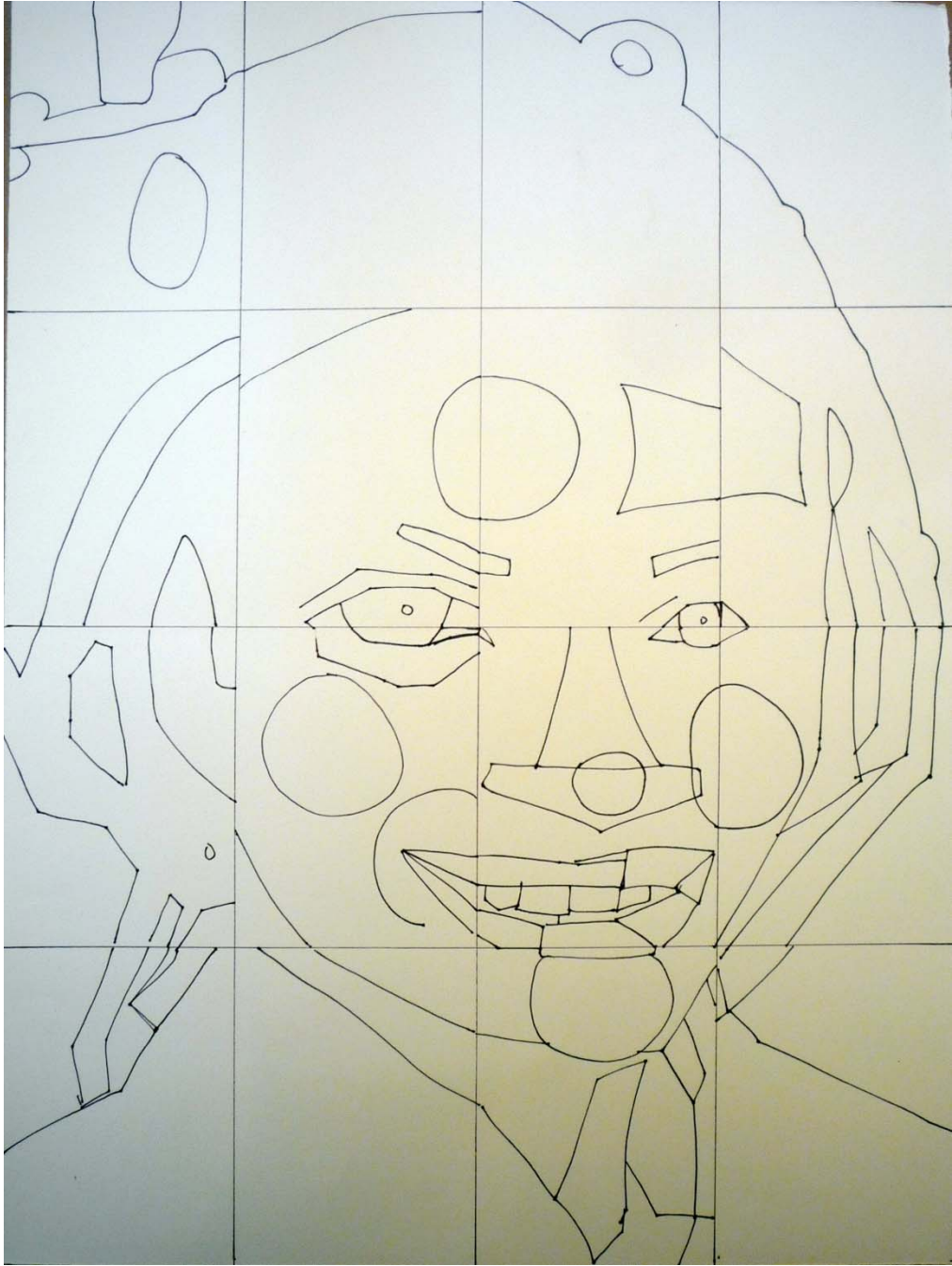


3. The result: You have abstracted your portrait using simple shapes. Now you are ready to draw those shapes onto your drawing paper.





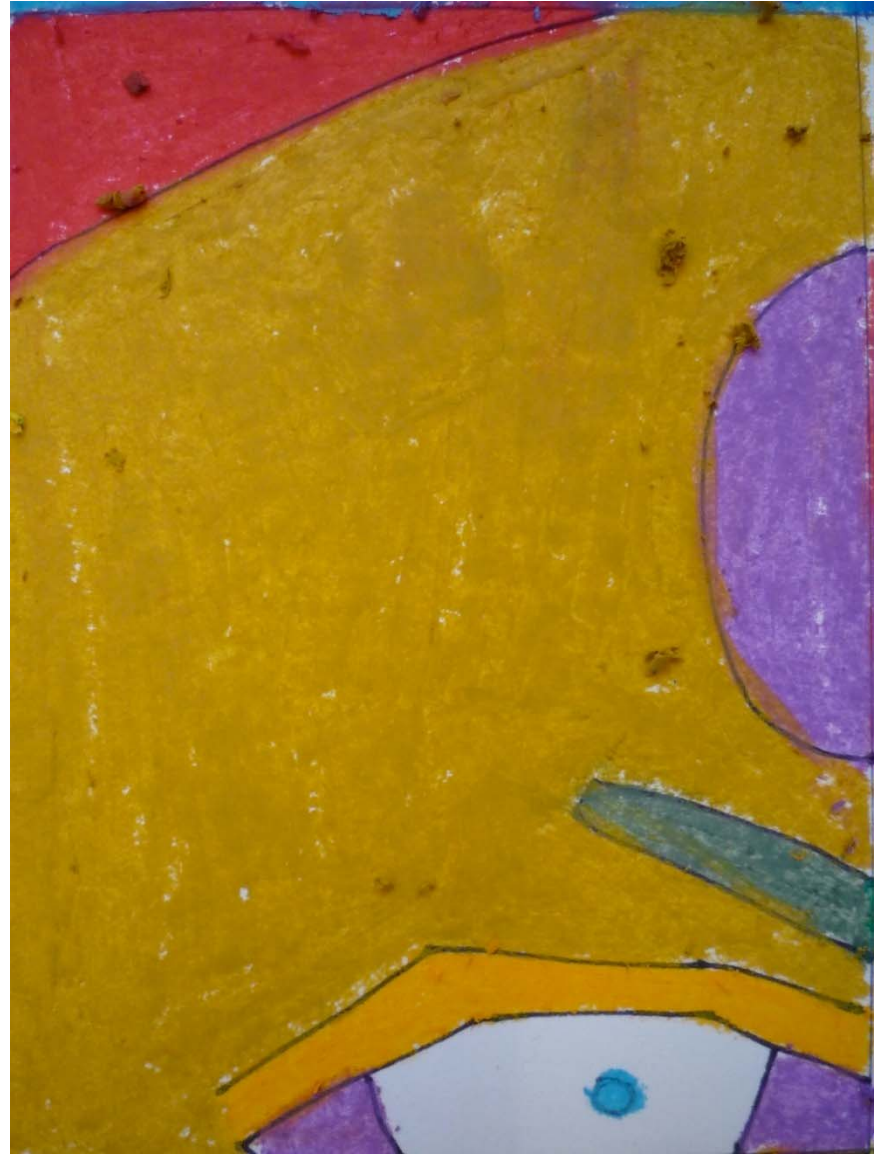




Part V

1. You will need your box of oil pastels. Chuck Close uses simplified shapes and bright colors to create his portraits. Try to use between two and five colors per rectangle.





2. Remember, this is an abstracted portrait.

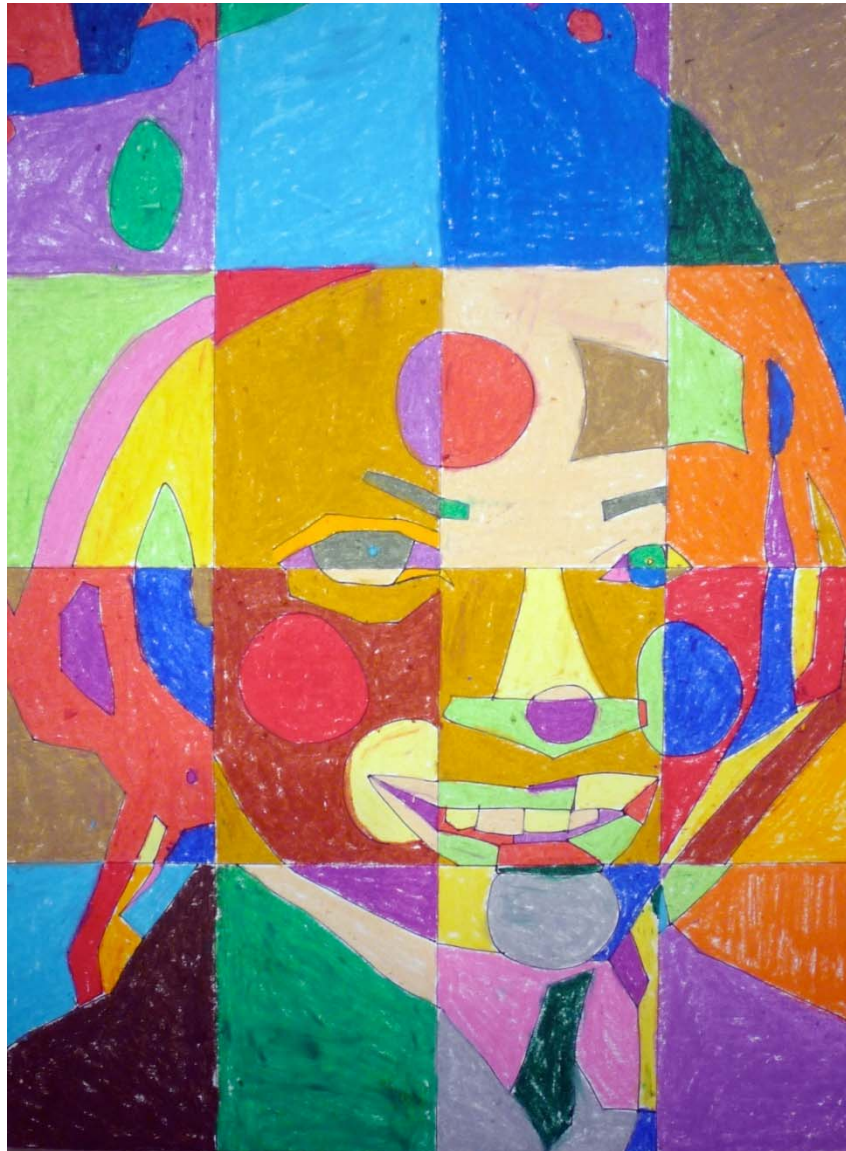


3. Try to cover all of the white paper.



Part VI : Finished Portrait

Let's talk about some of the choices you made while creating your portrait. How did you simplify the shapes in your colored printout? How did you choose your colors? Did you reserve particular colors for certain sections of your portrait?





Lesson Plan: Nick Cave

Date: October 24, 2009

Grade Level: 1–3; 5–7

Subject: Imagination, Material, and Performance

Theme: What are some of your fondest memories? Your parents have a lot of memories, but what are yours? Are they of family trips? Do they include your friends? About summer vacation? Or School? (Encourage your students to talk about their memories.)

If you were to make something about a particular memory, what kind of objects and materials would you use? Would you use everyday objects like cotton balls, toys, spoons, ballpoint pens, or even toothbrushes? Would you use found materials like bottle caps, plastic cartons, or newspapers? What about plants, twigs, leaves, or flowers? How would you tell us a story with those objects?

Nick Cave is a sculptor, fashion designer, and performance artist who uses found objects and unusual materials to create wearable art. Sometimes he or others will perform in the artwork he creates. What sort of way would you move if you wore this outfit? What would it sound like? Nick Cave call his outfits *Soundsuits*, because they will sometimes make noise when they move. What kind of story might be told of the person wearing this *Soundsuit*?

Description: This lesson introduces young children to the work and practice of Nick Cave, a sculptor, fashion designer, and performance artist who uses fabric and found objects/unusual materials to create wearable art.

Goals/Objectives:

To use found objects and non-traditional materials in creative ways

To show a relationship between imagination, material, and performance

Materials:

- paper, fabric
- scissors, hot glue, and hot glue gun
- bells, cotton balls, branches, straws, foil, air fresheners, small plastic animals, etc
- an old shirt and hat



Duration: 1 to 2 hours

Methodology:

Part I--T-shirt

1. What kind of story would you like to tell? What objects can you use to tell this story? Maybe you'd like to make an a *Soundsuit* that says something about recycling. You may choose bottle caps, plastic bags, and bubble wrap.
2. My *Soundsuit* is about my trip to the Florida Exotic Bird Sanctuary. I remember seeing beautiful birds, Cockatoos, Parrots, and Quakers. It was also during the spring, and the landscape was an amazing deep green. For my *Soundsuit*, I will be using leaves, feathers, pompoms, raffia, plastic berries, cotton balls, and miniature toy birds.
3. It's a good idea to gather all the materials that you think you may need at your workstation. You can pick up other things later on, as you need them.

4. First I arrange my materials on my table in the general pattern that I might use on my shirt.



5. Note: Please be careful with the hot glue gun.

I use a hot glue gun to attach the leaves to my shirt, alternating large, medium, and small leaves to create the impression of a wooded area until they completely covered the front and the back of the T-shirt.



I used pompoms to make flower-like shapes, inserted feathers and plastic berries, and attached raffia to the front of the T-shirt.



Part II--Hat

1. I follow the same process with the hat as well, hot-gluing large leaves around the base of the hat, then adding pompoms for the flowers.



2. Using gold-colored twisties, I creat a nest with the raffia and attached it to the hat.



3. I pull cotton balls to make cloud forms.



4. For the last step, I attach the birds to look as if they were flying through the clouds.



Part III--Finished *Soundsuit*

Let's talk about your *Soundsuits*. What type of story or ideas did you use to create your artwork? Did you have an idea, then look for materials that related to it or were you inspired by the objects? Does your *Soundsuit* make sound? How might you move in your *Soundsuit*?



Lesson Plan: Yinka Shonibare

Date: November 14, 2009

Grade Level: 1-3; 5-7

Subject: Personal Identity, Culture, and Fashion

Theme: What defines who you are? Is it your place of birth, your culture, or maybe your beliefs? What makes you identify with one group, but not another?

Identity

For instance, my neighbor's mother is from Portugal and her father is from Taiwan. She is interested in Tango and in Capoeira, which is an Afro-Brazilian art form combining dance and martial arts. She practices Buddhism and goes rock climbing. Angela belongs to a variety of groups, cultures, and belief systems—her identity is complex, as with all of us. Yinka Shonibare is interested in the ways we define ourselves and our assumptions about identity, especially national identity.

Shonibare was born in Britain and currently lives in London. His parents are Nigerian. He was raised in Nigeria and returned to London to study art. His work challenges the idea of national identity. He believes that ideas of nationalism are limiting to how we define ourselves.

What is nationalism?

Taking inspiration from the work of Yinka Shonibare, let us consider ways we present our identities externally.

Description: This lesson introduces young artists to the work and practice of Yinka Shonibare, a conceptual artist who creates installations, videos, sculptures, paintings, and photographs that explore issues of identity and social class.

Goals/Objectives:

To encourage young artists to consider ways to represent their personal and cultural identities.

Materials:

Fabric printed in various styles: Celtic, Japanese, African, Native American
Paisley, Plaid, Jeans, Flannel, Silk, various themes

black marker

glue (Elmers or Fabric Glue)

scissors

a shirt with collar

Camera to take picture of class in their Yinka Shonibare inspired shirts.



Duration: 1 to 2 hours

Methodology:

Part I--Choosing Fabric

1. Look at the examples of the shirts. How would you identify the person that might wear them? How would you describe the fabric? Does it remind you of a particular country, ethnicity, or lifestyle?
2. Invite your students to look at and choose fabrics that reflect their identities. Please encourage your students to choose at least five different fabrics.
3. It's a good idea to gather all the materials that you think you may need at your workstation. You can pick up other things later on, as you need them.

4. Your students could lay fabric on top of their shirt and trace areas like a pocket or collar. Or they could cut random shapes out of their fabric to glue onto their shirts. Encourage them to be creative.



5. Make sure the fabric covers all areas of the shirt.



Here is step by step of another shirt being assembled.





Part II: Finished Shirts



It's picture time! Have everyone wear their shirts and take a group portrait!